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ABSTRACT

A third-party national evaluation of the basic grants section of the Adult Education Act was conducted in September 1990. Although clients eligible for adult secondary education (ASE) constituted the largest segment of the target population, enrollments were highest in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) programs and most programs primarily served clients enrolled in adult basic education (ABE). Federal funds accounted for less than one-third of funds supporting adult education programs. ASE, ABE, and ESL participants received a median of 28, 35, and 113 hours of instruction, respectively. Except for ESL, no direct relationship existed between total hours of instruction and test score gains. Approximately one-third of participants reported employment-related benefits from program participation. Nearly half of those who started the program left for reasons external to the program. The program was not keeping up with the growth of its target population. The following actions were recommended: ensure that all programs have at least some full-time instructional and administrative staff, increase provision of support services, and identify and encourage use of the most appropriate instructional structures/designs. (Twenty-nine tables/figures are included. Appended are a table detailing the study objectives and reports where they are addressed and tables of contents of the major study reports.) (MN)

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NATIONAL EVALUATION OF ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Executive Summary

Prepared by:

Malcolm B. Young,
Howard Fleischman, Nicholas Fitzgerald and Mark A. Morgan
Development Associates, Inc.
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia 22209
(703) 276-0677

Prepared for:

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Under Secretary

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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This report is pursuant to Contract No. LC90065001 (Rob Barnes, Project Officer). The names of the persons employed or retained by Development Associates, Inc., with management or professional responsibility for this phase of the project and this report are listed below. The amount to be charged to the U.S. Department of Education for the entirety of this contract is approximately $2,690,731.

Development Associates: Project Director	Malcolm B. Young
Associate Director for Data Processing and Analysis	Mark A. Morgan
Associate Director for Field Operations	Howard Fleischman
Evaluation Design and Analysis Specialists	Nicholas B. Fitzgerald Laura Williams Paul J. Hopstock Thomas B. Jabine Larry Hotchkiss
CASAS Project Directors	Patricia Rickard Virginia K. Posey
MACRO International Telephone Survey Managers	Greg Mahnke James Dayton

The study reported herein was performed pursuant to a contract with the United States Department of Education. However, the opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department of Education should be inferred.

National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs

Executive Summary

Highlights

The Adult Education Act is intended to assist adults who lack the literacy skills needed for effective citizenship and productive employment. In September 1990, the U.S. Department of Education contracted with Development Associates, Inc., to conduct a national evaluation of the basic grants section of the Act. The basic grants section provides funds to states to, in turn, support local instructional programs for eligible adults. The major findings and conclusions from the study include:

- **Most clients are enrolled in ESL but most programs primarily serve clients enrolled in ABE, while the largest segment of the target population are clients who are eligible for ASE.** ESL accounts for 51 percent of the clients receiving services and 76 percent of the hours of instruction received. However, ABE clients are the plurality in 48 percent of programs (ESL is predominant in only 21 percent) and 32 percent of programs report they serve no ESL students at all. The ASE target population is almost twice the size of either the ABE or the ESL target groups and is growing annually about as much as ESL.

- **Federal funds account for less than one-third of the cash resources used to support adult education programs.** Fifty-five percent of the cash resources used to operate adult education programs originated from state funding sources; federal Adult Education Act funds accounted for another 25 percent; other federal programs accounted for 6 percent; and local and other sources contributed 14 percent.

- **Most participants, especially those in ABE and ASE, stay in the program a very short time.** ASE participants receive a median of 28 hours of instruction, ABE 35 hours, and ESL 113 hours.

- **Except for ESL, no direct relationship was found between client persistence (total hours of instruction) and gains in test scores.** The average amount of instruction received by ABE and ASE clients was substantially less than that received by ESL clients and apparently insufficient to influence literacy outcomes.

- **Many adults who participate in the program benefit, but many leave the program before they do.** The greatest benefits are in the area of English language and other basic academic skills; about a third of the clients indicate they benefit in some way in terms of employment, mostly by improving themselves on jobs they had when they enrolled. Almost half of those who start the program leave for reasons external to the program, such as employment, health, or child care problems.

- **The program is not keeping up with the growth of its target population.** The program's target population increases by about two-thirds more each year than the program successfully serves, with the greatest area of disparity being ASE. New additions to the program's target population exceed estimates of successful clients by about 800,000 annually.

- **To improve client benefits the program should:**

  → ensure that programs have at least some full-time instructional and administrative staff;
  → increase the provision of support services; and
  → identify and encourage the use of the most appropriate instructional structures and designs.

Section 1: Introduction

Organization of This Report

This report has five major sections. Following this introduction, it addresses the following major questions:

- What are the services the program provides and how many and what kind of clients does it serve? (Section 2.)
- What benefits do clients receive by participating in the program? (Section 3.)
- What is the program's impact on the national problem of English language literacy? (Section 4.)
- What are the implications of the study's findings for national policy and further research? (Section 5.)

Background: Adult Education

In the early 1960s, many observers in and outside of government realized that a substantial number of poor, unskilled, and uneducated adults were not being served by then existing social legislation. Their inadequate basic education or their inability to communicate proficiently in English put them at a major personal, social, and economic disadvantage. An initial step to address those needs was enactment of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which established the adult basic education program. Two years later, Congress passed the Adult Education Act, which subsequent amendments broadened and strengthened by, among other means, continuing to encourage establishment of local adult education programs through formula grants to the states.

Those grants, along with matching state funds, help support what amounts to a national network of local adult education service providers—school districts, community colleges, and other public and private agencies. Consistent with the objectives of the Act's state-administered basic grants program, provider services fall into three major categories:

- Adult basic education (ABE), equivalent to instruction provided in grades 1-8.
- Adult secondary education (ASE), equivalent to instruction supplied in grades 9-12, leading to a regular high school diploma or to taking the General Educational Development (GED) examination.

- English as a second language (ESL), for those whose native language is not English.

National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs

Rationale: The 1990-1994 national evaluation of adult education programs funded under the Act's basic state grants provision stemmed not only from the legislation itself but also from findings and concerns that surfaced during the 1980s. Agreement was widespread that deficiencies in functional literacy and computational skills comprised a serious national problem but that very little systematic information was available about the nature or effectiveness of the Department of Education's response. A strong consensus emerged regarding the critical need to learn more about the effectiveness of current adult education programs in order to plan for more effective interventions in the future.

Purpose: In 1990, the Department of Education launched a four-year national evaluation of adult education programs. Its central purpose: to evaluate adult education programs funded under the basic grants provision of the Act regarding their potential for significantly reducing deficits in the adult population with respect to literacy, English proficiency, and secondary education. The 12 specific objectives of the study and an indication of where among the study's major reports each is addressed are presented in Appendix A.

Design: Exhibit 1.1 provides a brief description of the data-collection instruments that served as the primary sources of information for the study: the Universe Survey, the Comprehensive Program Profile, four types of forms on which program staff recorded data on individual clients, and the telephone follow-up survey. The evaluation may be thought of as consisting of three major elements. The first, conducted in fall 1990, was the Universe Survey, a mail survey of all 2,819 local adult education instructional service programs receiving federal basic state grants funds in the program year ending June 30, 1990. Ninety-three percent, or 2,619 of the programs, responded. They provided data used to identify a nationally representative sample of 139 local programs for participation in the second major element of the evaluation, a longitudinal study.

The longitudinal study sought additional information about program structure, instructional schedules and approaches, students (clients), recruitment and placement methods, staff qualifications, coordination with other agencies, and program finances. Of the 139 programs contacted, 116 provided information on the characteristics of a national sample of 22,548 adults who enrolled during a 12-month period ending in April 1992. Of the 116, 110 also provided attendance and related update information on their sampled clients throughout a 30-month data-collection period.

The third major element was a telephone follow-up survey. Follow-up calls were completed to a sample of 5,401 clients from 109 local programs; these clients were included in the longitudinal phase of the study and were known to have been out of the program for about 6 months. All of these clients were asked to confirm their participation in the program, to indicate the number of classes they attended, and to say

Exhibit 1.1
Primary Sources of Information for the Study

- The **Universe Survey** surveyed all federally supported adult education instructional service providers. Conducted in the fall of 1990, it obtained data from 2,619 (93 percent) of the local programs receiving federal basic state grants funds in the program year ending June 30, 1990.

- The **Comprehensive Program Profile** sought more detailed information about program structure, instruction, and operations than the information obtained in the Universe Survey. A Program Profile was obtained from 131 of the 139 local programs that agreed to participate in the longitudinal phase of the evaluation. For programs that provided client-level data from more than one instructional site, we obtained data pertaining to instructional variables from site directors and used site-level data rather than program-level data in the analyses.

- The **Client Intake Record: Part A**, which was completed for each sampled client, provides basic demographic information on the client as well as program information, such as placement level, scheduled start date, and local intake procedures used for the client. Program staff completed the form from program intake records. Analyses in this report are based on data for 22,548 clients from 116 local programs

- The **Client Intake Record: Part B**, which was to be completed for all sampled clients who attended at least one instructional session, collected more detailed information than Part A contained, such as client characteristics (including receipt of public assistance), living arrangements, and employment status. Part B also asked clients to rank, by importance, 14 reasons for taking adult education instruction. Spanish versions of the form were provided as needed. This report draws on data from 13,845 clients in 108 local programs.

- The **Client Update Record** provides instructional and attendance data and was completed at 5- to 8-week intervals by local program staff for each client who received instruction during the reporting period for up to 18 months from the time of entry into the program. Analyses in this report are based on data from 18,461 clients in 110 local programs.

- The **Client Test Record** provides scores on tests of basic skills given near the time of enrollment and after varying numbers of hours of instruction. Analyses are based on pretest scores from 8,581 clients in 88 local programs and on posttest scores from 1,919 clients in 65 programs across the United States.

- The **Telephone Follow-up Survey** provides information about the quality of the instruction, reasons for termination, and the results of instruction from a subsample of clients 6 months after they left the program. Data from 5,401 clients from 109 local programs are used in this report.

why they had left their class or course of instruction. The bulk of the survey reflects responses of 4,653 respondents (86 percent of those contacted) who attended at least 3 adult education classes. These clients provided information on their perceptions of the program and on benefits they received. After applying corrective weights to adjust for selection bias, the clients in the follow-up survey are quite similar to the national sample of all clients who began instruction, except for having received fewer hours of instruction than the average client and for having been out of the program for 6 months.

Issues and Definitions: Implementing the study involved numerous challenges, some of which serve to reveal issues in the field as well as provide useful lessons for future evaluations of adult education programs.[1] These include:

- **Determining what was a "program" for the purposes of the national evaluation.** For inclusion in the evaluation, each program had to receive financial support through the basic grants provisions of the Adult Education Act. However, there is no available national list of grantees, and funding practices and definitions vary among the states. For example, some administrative entities receive several basic grants while some grants are awarded to regional administrative agencies that have several subgrantees that actually implement the program.

- **Determining who was a client for purposes of inclusion in the evaluation.** We defined a client as a person registered to receive ABE, ASE, or ESL services directly supported by Adult Education Act funds, or services similar in content to, and closely coordinated with, instruction directly supported by the Act. Thus, we included persons who completed a program's intake/registration form, which is usually filled out just prior to the start of instruction. They encompassed, among others, persons who:

  → received ASE instruction in programs that received Act funds for use in ABE and ESL only;

  → lived in homeless shelters, halfway houses, group homes, and other intermediate detention facilities;

  → were noncitizens, including illegal aliens; or

  → transferred from one instructional delivery site to another.

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[1] Available on request is a paper that explores in detail the challenges noted here, among others, and how they were addressed by evaluation staff. Ask for "Description of Problems and Issues Encountered During the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs." Address requests to Development Associates, Inc., 1730 North Lynn Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209-2023.

Not included, however, were those incarcerated in prison or jail, persons enrolled only in vocational skills (e.g., electrical repair) nor those enrolled in enrichment courses (e.g., parenting). Generally, clients in nursing homes were also not included in the study.

- **Obtaining sufficient basic descriptive data.** Information at the state level on local programs varies considerably in content and quality. Some programs did not have information on the composition of staff or the nature of the instruction provided at different sites. Nor did many programs have any precise idea of the number of adults newly enrolled each year or of the number of different individuals enrolled at any given time or over the period of a program year. Information that was on hand seems to have been collected to comply with state services reimbursement and related reporting requirements. The data used to generate the client sample design were obtained through our Universe Survey and long discussions with local program staff.

- **Securing on-site assistance in data collection from local program staff.** The most feasible and economic way of obtaining information on an ongoing basis over the 30-month data-collection period was to use local program staff. To ease the burden as much as possible, we offered incentives and allowed substantial flexibility as circumstances warranted. For instance, incentives included reimbursement for extra staff hours expended on data collection, encouragement from state departments of education, and psychological rewards (e.g., publicity and supporting letters from education agencies). However, the part-time or transient nature of many program administrative and instructional staff made securing a sufficient number of programs willing and able to implement the design quite difficult.

- **Adapting to ongoing changes in local programs.** Key personnel and the location of instructional sites changed during the course of the study in many projects. Within the first 6 months of data collection, for example, 16 percent of program directors trained in the requirements of the study had departed, sometimes because their positions had been abolished.

Purpose of This Report

This report is the summary of four reports and several working papers produced during the course of the study. The **first report** (1992) describes the adult education service delivery system and is based on a mail survey, completed in December 1990, of all service providers and on more detailed information obtained from 131 programs during May-November 1991.

The **second report** (1993) presents characteristics of clients who entered sampled adult education programs during the 12-month intake period beginning in April 1991. Program staff recorded client data on forms specially provided for that purpose. The report also presents preliminary findings on client attendance and persistence.

The **third report** (1994) describes patterns of attendance and factors associated with the persistence of adult education clients during the first 12 months following their enrollment in the program during the intake period beginning April 1991. The major data source for the report was the client update record, which provided data on attendance patterns of, and services used by, each client.

The **fourth report** (1994) focuses on client outcomes and on the program's impact on adult education needs vis-a-vis the target population. This report uses the study's final data files relating to research described in the first three reports and includes telephone follow-up survey data collected from a subsample of clients six months after they terminated instruction.

The **cost study report** (1994) presents information on average service costs, including estimating the cost per hour of instruction received, and the extent to which federal and state funds for adult education are supplemented by other resources at the local level. Data are reported for each program component and for cash and noncash costs. Data sources include the survey of a national sample of 128 programs and case studies of program costs conducted at 12 programs.

Published separately, this executive summary presents an overview of the findings and conclusions of all of the earlier reports and reflects the final data set from the study.

Section 2:
Description of the Program and Its Clients

How Many Local Programs Are There?

In June 1990, there were 2,819 local programs supported by the Adult Education Act. Most local programs are small and located outside metropolitan areas, but most clients are served by large programs in urban areas. As noted in exhibit 2.1, more than a third of the programs were serving fewer than 100 clients during October 1990, while about 12 percent were serving more than 1,000. Instructional services are offered by the programs at some 24,000 delivery sites, ranging from facilities dedicated exclusively to adult education serving many clients to church basements that serve only a few.

What Types of Institutions Provide the Services?

Most programs are administered by local education agencies (69 percent) and community colleges (17 percent). Other programs are part of volunteer organizations and community service groups (6 percent), technical institutes (6 percent), and regional educational service agencies or consortia of public school districts (2 percent). From the perspective of clients served, 73 percent of clients are served in programs administered by public school systems, 18 percent in programs administered by community colleges, and 9 percent in other organizations.

What Kind of Instruction Does the Program Provide?

Exhibit 2.1
Proportion of Local Programs by Number of Clients Served
(*N* = 2,575)

Number of Clients Served	Percent of Programs
More than 5,000	2 %
1,000 - 5,000	10
500 - 999	11
100 - 499	40
Fewer than 100	37
Total	100 %

Most federally supported adult education programs offer three basic types of instruction: adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL). ABE instruction is designed for adults functioning at or below the 8th-grade level; ASE instruction is for adults functioning at the secondary-school level and may culminate with a high school diploma or a GED certificate; and ESL instruction is designed to teach English to non-English speakers. Although 13 percent of programs offer services in only one of the three component areas (2 percent provide only ESL, 7 percent only ABE, and 4 percent only ASE), 60 percent provide some instruction in all three. Components differ substantially in terms of instruction, type of clients served, and outcomes.

How Many People Does the Program Serve?

There were between 2.6 and 3.2 million adult education clients who received 1 or more hours of instruction during the 1992 program year (see exhibit 2.2). About 2,016,288 new clients entered the program over that 12-month period.

Exhibit 2.2
High and Low Estimates of the Number of Clients Receiving 1 or More Hours of Instruction Over a 12-Month Period

	High Estimate	Low Estimate
1. Number of newly enrolled clients based on study sample	2,016,288	2,016,288
2. Possible reporting problems (± 10%)	+201,629	-201,629
3. Number of clients who enrolled but never received instruction (-15%)	-324,106	-265,178
4. Number of clients excluded from the sampling frame:		
a. clients in prisons, hospitals, and other institutions (+12 % of clients with instruction)	+227,257	+185,938
b. clients in programs that began after the sample was drawn[a]	+6,000	+6,000
c. clients in instructional delivery sites that opened after the sample was drawn[b]	+28,000	+28,000
5. Number of clients already being served when the study year began[c]:		
a. clients who entered the program 1-12 months earlier and were still active at the start of the intake year (+35% of new clients, i.e., steps 1-4)	+755,895	+618,460
b. clients who entered the program 13-24 months earlier and were still active at the start of the intake year (+8.9% of new clients, i.e., steps 1-4)	+192,104	+157,176
c. clients who entered the program 25 or more months earlier and were still active at the start of intake year (+3% of new clients, i.e., steps 1-4)	+64,754	+52,981
Total number of clients served	3,166,226	2,599,631

[a] Number of clients in excluded programs (4.b) is based on sampled programs that closed prior to data collection and on discussions with state directors indicating that approximately equal numbers of small programs open and close each year.

[b] Number of clients in excluded sites (4.c) is based on contact with program directors regarding sites that opened during the study period.

[c] Numbers of clients already being served (5.a, 5.b, 5.c) are based on extrapolations from 18 months of attendance data (see the second interim report for discussion of procedures used).

How Are Clients Distributed Across the Three Service Components and Geographic Regions?

Some 46 percent of the adults entering the program during the study period enrolled in ESL, with 30 percent enrolling in ASE and 24 percent in ABE (see exhibit 2.3). Of those who actually received one or more hours of instruction, about 51 percent were in ESL, 30 percent in ASE, and 19 percent in ABE. The proportion of ESL clients receiving services has increased by over two and a half times since the last national study was conducted in 1979 (from 19 to 51 percent of all clients receiving service), while the proportion of clients in the other two components, particularly the proportion of clients in ABE, has decreased (from 44 to 24 percent in ABE).

There are important regional differences in the number and type of clients the program serves. As exhibit 2.3 shows, overall, some 40 percent of the program's clients live in the West, 30 percent in the South, 19 percent in the North Central region, and 11 percent in the Northeast. Of clients in the western states, 82 percent enrolled in ESL, compared with less than 25 percent in the other three census regions.

Exhibit 2.3
Enrollment by Instructional Component and Region of Country
(*N* = 22,548)

Instructional Component	Percent of Entering Clients				
	Northeast	North Central	South	West	Overall
ESL	24 %	21 %	20 %	82 %	46 %
ABE	35	37	39	4	24
ASE	41	42	41	14	30
Overall	11 %	19 %	30 %	40 %	100 %

When Do Clients Enroll?

Program descriptions tend to emphasize an "open-entry, open-exit" instructional design, but the enrollment and attendance pattern for most adults is consistent with the traditional fall entry/summer exit pattern of elementary and secondary schools or the September-January-March community college enrollment cycle. September and January are the months of greatest intake, with August and March providing the next highest numbers.

How Long Do They Stay?

Overall, clients who attended at least one class received a median of 58 hours of instruction (exhibit 2.4). ESL clients had the highest median hours of instruction (113), followed by ABE clients (35) and ASE clients (28). Directly related to the high proportion of ESL participants in the West (82 percent), clients in that region had the highest median hours of instruction with 107.

Exhibit 2.4
Median Hours of Instruction of Clients Who Received 1 Hour or More
(*N* = 15,870)

Region	Hours			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Overall
North Central	57	25	34	34
Northeast	77	58	33	50
South	62	30	24	30
West	136	36	25	107
Total U.S.	113	35	28	58

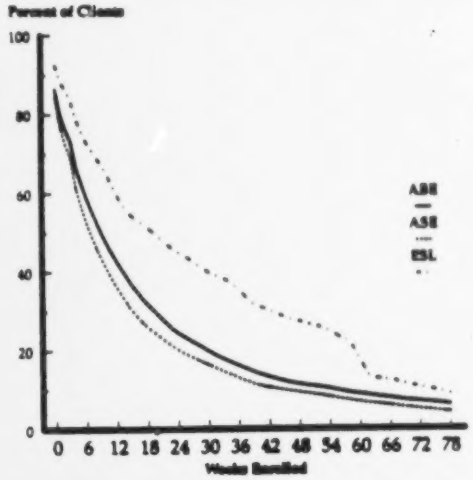
What Does This Mean for the Distribution of Instructional Hours?

In terms of total hours of instruction received, clients in ESL classes account for approximately 76 percent; ASE, 13 percent; and ABE, 11 percent.

What About Weeks of Participation?

Measured in terms of weeks enrolled, rather than hours of instruction received, the results are essentially the same. Exhibit 2.5 shows persistence rates for clients who received at least 1 hour of instruction. Over time, fewer and fewer clients attend. As the graph shows, rates for ABE and ASE are nearly identical, while clients in ESL stay enrolled in

Exhibit 2.5
Persistence Rates in Weeks for Clients Who Received 1 Hour or More of Instruction by Instructional Component

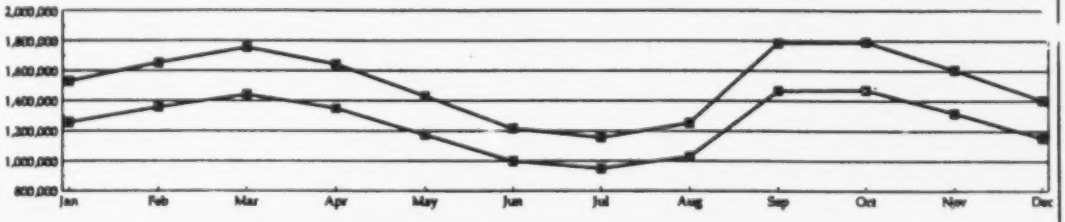


programs longer. ESL clients receive substantially more instruction during the first twelve months than do ABE or ASE clients. Shortly into the second year, the number of ESL clients receiving instruction declines sharply, and by the 18th month, the rates for all three components have converged. Overall, ESL clients enroll for a mean of 30 weeks, compared with 20 weeks for ABE and 17 weeks for ASE clients. Across the three components, clients remain enrolled for a mean of 24 weeks.

Does the Number of Active Clients Vary During the Year?

On the basis of intake data collected and estimates of the total number of clients served, exhibit 2.6 presents estimated fluctuations in the number of active clients at various times over a 12-month, calendar-year intake period. The number of active clients reaches its low point in July and peaks in September/October and March.

Exhibit 2.6
High and Low Estimates of Total Number of Active Clients by Month



Note: The estimates involve alternative assumptions about implementation of the original sample design and establishment of new programs.

Why Do Clients Enroll in the Program?

Clients come to adult education programs for a variety of reasons, but almost all attend voluntarily. Some 81 percent of all new clients report that they enroll in order to achieve personal or employment goals; only 11 percent do so because they are required to attend by their employer or another program or agency; and about 8 percent enroll to satisfy family or friends.

What Sorts of People Does the Program Serve?

Overall, clients in the program tend to be young (66 percent under 31), without a high school diploma or its equivalent (68 percent), and living in a major metropolitan area (60 percent). Based on modal characteristics, the typical client of the program is a foreign born (53 percent), female (56 percent), between the ages of 22 and 30 (33 percent), without a high school diploma (68 percent); speaks a language other than English at home (58 percent); is employed (42 percent); and is without children under the age of 6 living in her home (62 percent).

It is important to note, however, that new clients enrolling in ESL services are different in many important ways from those enrolling in ABE and ASE, whereas new clients enrolling in ABE and ASE are quite similar. (See exhibit 2.7 for new-client profiles.) The ESL population is primarily foreign born, with most speaking Spanish in their home, whereas the ABE/ASE population is primarily native born speakers of English. The ESL population is much more highly educated and much more likely to live in a major metropolitan area than clients in either ABE of ASE. They are also much more likely to live in the West, and they are slightly more likely to be employed when they enroll than either of the other groups. ASE clients, on the other hand, tend to be the youngest and to be the least likely to have graduated from high school.

What Are the Characteristics of Program Staff?

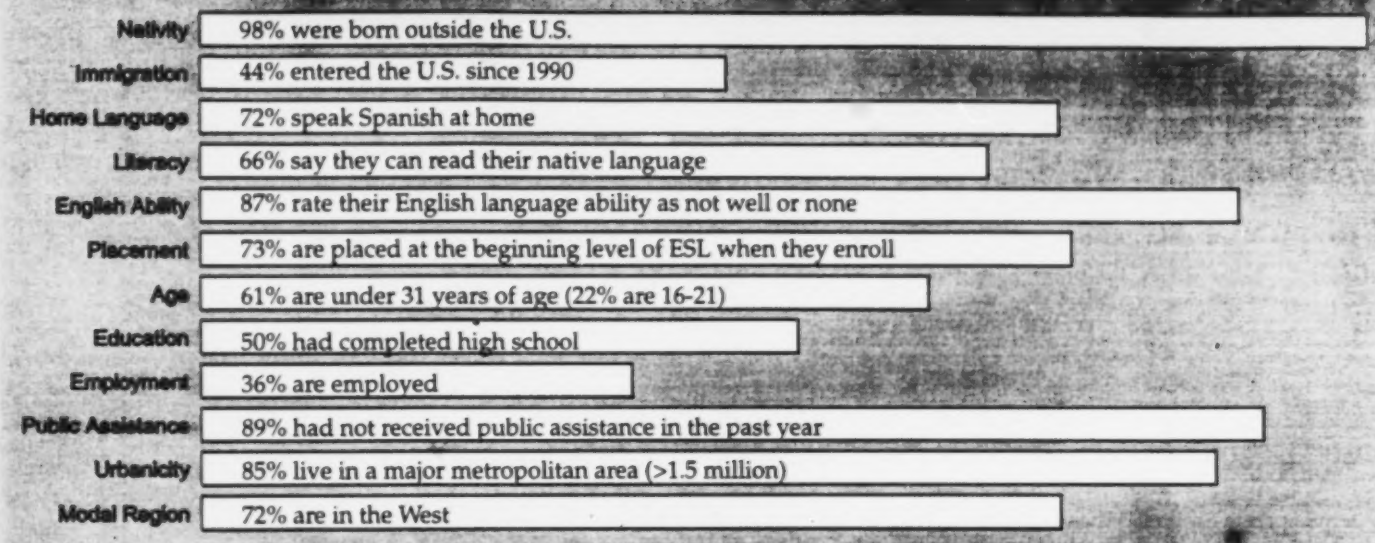
Most programs rely heavily on part-time, rather than full-time, instructors and tutors, and on volunteers.

- 59 percent do not have full-time instructional staff.
- 47 percent do not have full-time administrative staff.
- 36 percent of programs do not have full-time staff of any type.
- The overall ratio of part-time to full-time instructors, on average, is 4 to 1.
- Approximately three-fourths of programs use volunteers, with volunteers most widely used as tutors.

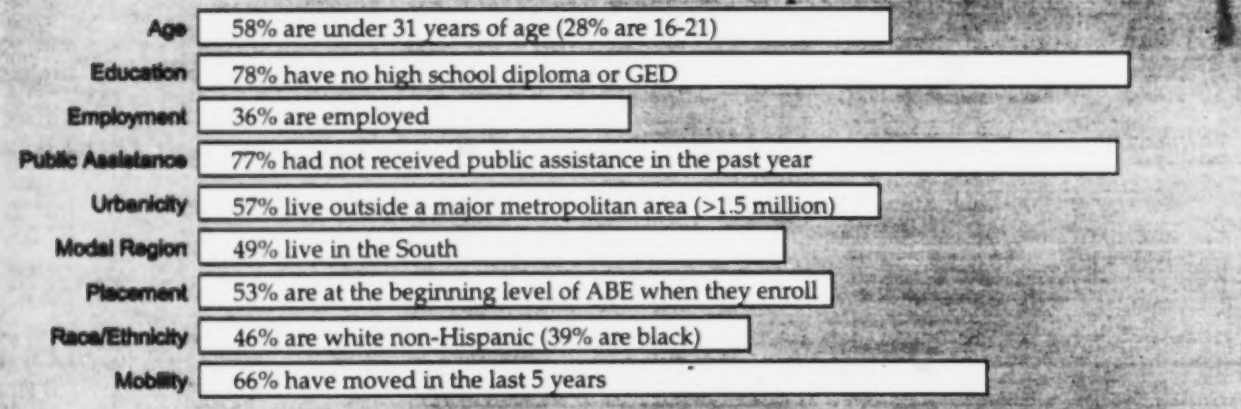
With respect to professional qualifications:

- Approximately 40 percent of full-time instructors and 33 percent of part-time instructors have a master's or higher degree.
- 18 percent of full-time staff are certified specifically in adult education and another 68 percent are certified in another educational area.
- Of the part-time staff, 8 percent are certified in adult education and 80 percent are certified in another area.
- Approximately 80 percent of full-time instructors, and just under half of part-time instructors, have been teaching for more than 3 years.
- Between 55 and 60 percent of instructional staff are more likely to teach in more than one instructional component than to specialize.

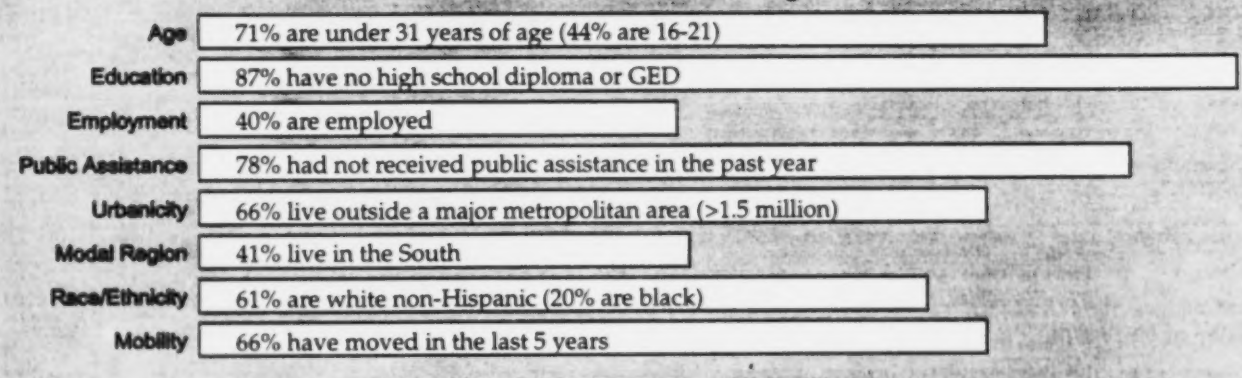
Profile of New Clients in ESL (46 percent of all new clients)


Nativity
98% were born outside the U.S.
Immigration
44% entered the U.S. since 1990
Home Language
72% speak Spanish at home
Literacy
66% say they can read their native language
English Ability
87% rate their English language ability as not well or none
Placement
73% are placed at the beginning level of ESL when they enroll
Age
61% are under 31 years of age (22% are 16-21)
Education
50% had completed high school
Employment
36% are employed
Public Assistance
89% had not received public assistance in the past year
Urbanicity
85% live in a major metropolitan area (>1.5 million)
Modal Region
72% are in the West

Profile of New Clients in ABE (24 percent of all new clients)


Age
58% are under 31 years of age (28% are 16-21)
Education
78% have no high school diploma or GED
Employment
36% are employed
Public Assistance
77% had not received public assistance in the past year
Urbanicity
57% live outside a major metropolitan area (>1.5 million)
Modal Region
49% live in the South
Placement
53% are at the beginning level of ABE when they enroll
Race/Ethnicity
46% are white non-Hispanic (39% are black)
Mobility
66% have moved in the last 5 years

Profile of New Clients in ASE (30 percent of all new clients)


Age
71% are under 31 years of age (44% are 16-21)
Education
87% have no high school diploma or GED
Employment
40% are employed
Public Assistance
78% had not received public assistance in the past year
Urbanicity
66% live outside a major metropolitan area (>1.5 million)
Modal Region
41% live in the South
Race/Ethnicity
61% are white non-Hispanic (20% are black)
Mobility
66% have moved in the last 5 years

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- 85 percent of instructors have received initial or in-service training, and virtually all programs report that they have provided at least some in-service training to their instructional staff within the previous program year, most frequently in the areas of reading instruction, assessment of client needs, and writing instruction.

What Kind of Instruction Do Clients Receive?

Adult educators use a variety of classroom settings and student groupings to provide services to their clients:

- Some 46 percent of students receive their instruction only in a classroom setting with a teacher or a teacher aide.
- 4 percent receive their instruction only in a learning lab, often a computer-assisted lab.
- 1 percent receive their instruction only with a tutor or some other form of individualized study.
- 15 percent receive their instruction in both a classroom setting and a learning lab.
- 34 percent receive their instruction with some other combination of settings.

There are also a variety of curriculum approaches and designs that can be used in the instruction of adult education clients, and adult educators do not agree on which are the most desirable and effective. Over half the programs (57 percent) characterized themselves as using more highly individualized than fixed curriculum designs, with another 27 percent placing themselves in the middle of this continuum. With respect to emphasizing academic as opposed to workplace or life skills curricula, 56 percent of the programs emphasized the academic, while 34 percent did not emphasize one orientation over the other. The programs with a clear-cut emphasis on academic curricula serve about 46 percent of all clients, while those with a strong workplace or life skills emphasis serve 17 percent.

What Do Clients Say About Their Instruction?

Half of the former clients indicated that their lessons were always at a level they could understand, and another third indicated that this was the case most of the time. Similarly, 53 percent of clients indicated that the instructional materials to which they were exposed were always helpful to them and another 29 percent said this was true most of the time.

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What Support Services Are Provided?

The great majority of program directors report that their clients' needs for counseling or job search assistance are being fully, or at least somewhat, met. Directors of at least half of the programs, however, indicate that needs in six other areas are not addressed at all, either directly by the program or through referrals to cooperating agencies.

In the case of child care, for example, 42 percent of female clients and 32 percent of male clients (37 percent of all clients) have young children (under age 6) at home, but only 43 percent of programs (serving 54 percent of all active clients) report addressing clients' child care requirements "somewhat" or "fully" (exhibit 2.8). Thus, just under half of all clients have no program-provided child care assistance available. Although not all clients with a child under age 6 at home require child care assistance to enable them to attend class, presumably many do.

Exhibit 2.8
Proportion of Programs Meeting Clients' Support Service Needs "Somewhat" or "Fully"
(*N* = 131)

Clients' Support Service Needs	Percent of Programs Meeting Needs of Clients	Percent of All Clients These Programs Enroll
Counseling	91 %	95 %
Job search assistance	82	73
Transportation	52	36
Child care	43	54
Translator services	39	62
Financial assistance	37	46
Case management	31	50
Health services	30	16

How Important Are These Services?

The study found a strong positive relationship between client use of support services and hours of instruction. Most adult education programs have established relationships with community groups to help provide support services. Nationally, 84 percent of programs report that groups in their communities regularly provide such support, and more than 75 percent of programs receive support from local school districts, literacy councils, employment and training agencies, libraries, and other state and local agencies. These organizations assist adult education programs by referring clients, providing facilities

and equipment, and helping to recruit volunteers. Also, some programs receive payments for special services and financial contributions. Most programs report receiving at least two of these five major types of support.

How Much Are Support Services Really Used?

The study found that at least 25 percent of active clients used one or more of the support services provided by their program at least once during the study period. As exhibit 2.9 shows, of the eight services, counseling is the most frequently used (16 percent of clients), followed by financial assistance (7 percent), transportation (7 percent), and child care (5 percent). Case management, job search assistance, health services, and translator services were each used by less than 5 percent of the clients.

There were small differences in reported use of support services by program size and urbanicity, but some dramatic differences exist in use of these services across the three instructional components. For example, 27 percent of ABE clients and 24 percent of ASE clients used counseling services, whereas only 7 percent of ESL clients used such services.

Exhibit 2.9
Proportion of Clients Using Support Services
By Instructional Component
(*N* = 12,864)

Support Service	Percent of Clients			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Overall
Counseling	7 %	27 %	24 %	16 %
Financial assistance	1	17	12	7
Transportation	3	15	8	7
Child care	2	8	9	5
Case management	1	11	6	4
Job search assistance	1	5	6	3
Health services	1	7	5	3
Translator services	2	1	<1	1

What Do We Know About Program Expenditures?

Sources of Support: Adult education programs obtain the resources they need from a variety of federal, state, and local sources. During the past 10 years, the major federal sources of funds for local adult education programs have been the Adult Education Act, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), State Legalization Impact Assistance Grants (SLIAG), the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, and the Work Incentive (WIN)/Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program.[2] At the local level, most programs combine funds from two or more of these sources.

Quite often, local adult education program directors do not know precisely how much of their funding comes from each of several possible sources of federal, state, and local support. In many states, the state department of education combines federal and state adult education funds, and most local program directors do not know (or have any reason or need to know) how much of the funding they receive is federal and how much is from a state appropriation. Conversely, in almost all states JTPA funds go directly to local adult education programs, and officials in the state departments of education generally do not know how much JTPA support their various local programs receive. Furthermore, the manner in which WIN/JOBS and SLIAG funds reach local programs varies substantially across states.

Because of the complexity of this and several other issues associated with program finance, the national evaluation included 12 case studies that specifically examined questions of program finance as a supplement to data collected through the mail surveys. On the basis of the detailed case study analyses, we estimated that 55 percent of the cash expenditures made by local adult education programs originated from state sources of funding, 25 percent from the Adult Education Act, 6 percent from other federal sources, and 14 percent from local and other sources of funding.

Cash vs. In-kind: Most adult education programs rely on noncash or in-kind, as well as cash, resources. In most cases, the sponsoring agencies of the local programs provide at least some necessary space, materials, or program support personnel at little or no cost. Some programs receive substantial amounts of cash or in-kind support from their local government, private businesses, or foundations. Almost all of these noncash resources are provided by the programs' sponsoring agencies, other cooperating community agencies, or local volunteers. Some programs receive substantial amounts of donated equipment (e.g., computers, buses, or motor homes that have been converted into mobile classrooms), but these are exceptions rather than the norm. Across the 12 case study programs, the ratio of cash to noncash resources was about 7 to 1. In almost all cases, classroom and other instructional space constituted, by far, the largest proportion of noncash resources.

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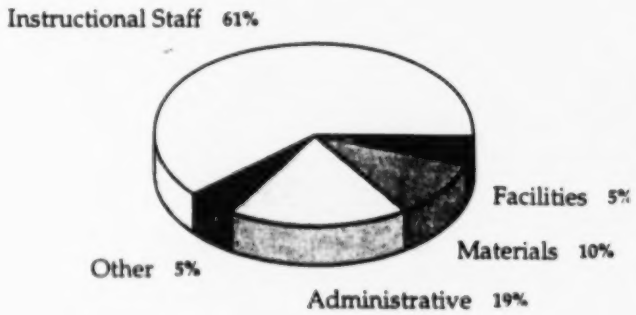
[2] Alamprese, J.A. and Sivilli, J.S. (1992) Study of Federal Funding Sources and Services for Adult Education. Washington, D.C.: COSMOS Corporation.

Resource Allocation: How programs allocate their financial resources among various program activities is illustrated in exhibit 2.10, which is based on survey data from the national sample of local program directors. As the exhibit shows, programs allocate about 61 percent of their funds for instructional staff, 19 percent for administrative and clerical costs, 10 percent for instructional materials, 5 percent for facilities, and 5 percent to other expenses.

Exhibit 2.10
Categories and Distribution of Program Expenditures



Instructional Costs: To estimate the cost of providing instruction, we calculated an average "cost per seat hour" on the basis of the case study and the mail survey data. For the 12 case study programs, the cost was based on the number of clients served by each program during 1992, the estimated number of their hours of instruction, and other cost information gleaned from the site visits. Across the 12 programs, the cash cost per seat hour ranged from $0.82 to $9.80, and the total (cash plus noncash) cost ranged from $1.61 to $9.84.[3] The mean cash cost of an hour of instruction in the 12 case study sites was $4.57, with a standard deviation (σ) of $2.80. For the three instructional components, on the basis of the more detailed case study data, we calculate the mean costs per hour as follows: ESL, $4.28 ($\sigma$ = $3.84); ABE, $6.11 ($\sigma$ = $3.47); and ASE, $5.12 ($\sigma$ = $2.69).

Why Do Clients Leave the Program?

Local program administrators were unable to provide the reason(s) most clients in the study terminated their instruction. Consequently, information about why clients leave is based on the telephone follow-up sample. Based on that information, a plurality of clients (45 percent) leave adult education for reasons external to the program (exhibit 2.11). Such nonprogram-related reasons for leaving adult education are particularly characteristic of ESL and ABE clients. Most often, they cite employment-related or family-related reasons for leaving adult education. Overall, only 7 percent of the clients left adult education for instructional reasons that suggest they were dissatisfied with the program in some way.

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[3] One small, rural case study program provides most services from donated mobile classrooms and uses only state-of-the-art computers donated by IBM. This program was eliminated from the calculation of the noncash and total-cost part of these analyses.

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Exhibit 2.11
Reasons Clients Left the Program
(*N* = 4,653)

Reason for Leaving	Percent of Clients			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Overall
Left satisfied	**29 %**	**41 %**	**54 %**	**41 %**
Completed program	22	29	39	30
Completed required attendance	1	2	3	2
Got what went for/achieved goals	2	4	6	4
Other (e.g., enrolled in school, got a job)	6	8	8	7
Outside events	**57**	**42**	**34**	**45**
Personal illness, health problems	5	5	4	5
Family responsibilities (includes child care)	14	12	9	11
Transportation problems	5	5	3	4
Change of work/job responsibilities	28	14	13	19
Other reasons not to do with course itself	9	9	7	8
Instructional factors	**6**	**9**	**6**	**7**
Personal embarrassment/discomfort	1	1	0	1
Lack of progress/dissatisfaction w program	1	2	2	2
Took too much time and energy (e.g., too far)	3	4	4	4
Other reasons reflective of the program	4	4	5	4
Combination of above categories	**6**	**4**	**4**	**4**
No reason given (can't say, just left)	**2**	**4**	**2**	**3**
Total	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**	**100 %**

ASE clients most often left adult education because they had completed their course of study. Altogether, 41 percent of the clients indicated they had left the program satisfied, most frequently because of program completion. Because many clients appear to behave in terms of the traditional school year, "completing the program" may simply indicate that the semester had ended.

To assess the relationship between attendance and reasons for leaving the program, we looked at the number of hours attended from intake to departure and the number of weeks enrolled. From the standpoint of total (median) hours of instruction, the data indicate that clients in each instructional component who were satisfied with their

program of instruction attended adult education classes longer than clients who left the program for reasons other than being satisfied.

What Are Predictors of Client Persistence?

We found that several variables within the control of local programs are important predictors of the number of hours of instruction that clients receive. Across all three components, the following program factors were the strongest predictors of persistence:

- Presence of support services that clients actually use;
- Receipt of instruction during the day as opposed to evening hours;
- Type of instructional setting (but this varied across service components).

Support Services: Use of support services is a strong predictor for all instructional components. The presence of such services may well explain why some clients can sustain their participation in adult education and others cannot. The degree to which services are integrated (i.e., how well the educational services are coordinated with services provided by other agencies, and the breadth of the services) was also assessed. Integration of services was classified as high, medium, or low. The relationship between the measure of integration of services and client persistence was most clear for the ABE instructional component. ABE clients are more likely to persist in programs that score well on integration of services.

Time of Instruction: The second particularly strong program factor—receiving instruction during the day—is predictive of persistence for all three instructional components. Regardless of component, clients who attend classes only during the daytime are the most likely to persist, and those who attend only at night are the least likely. While the time of day that instruction is received is highly predictive of sustained program attendance, it almost certainly is not the primary cause. Rather, it is likely that clients who are free to attend classes during the day can attend classes for more hours at a time (morning and afternoon class sessions often last longer than those at night) and can attend more frequently. Also, ability to attend classes during the day generally is a function of family or employment characteristics, which may be the real explanation for our results. While such factors were included in our analyses, it is reasonable to believe that their importance was hidden because no one or two such reasons were predominant.

Learning Environment: How the third particularly strong factor—a client's learning environment—is related to persistence differs by instructional component. ESL clients whose instruction includes independent study or participation in a learning lab environment are more likely to persist than those whose instruction is only classroom based. Participation in a learning lab rather than only classroom-based instruction is also predictive of persistence for ASE clients, but having a program that includes independent study is not. ABE clients whose instruction is provided only in a teacher-based classroom are more likely to persist than those whose instruction also includes

independent study. It may be that ABE clients need the structure and nurture provided by teacher-based classrooms and are not yet ready for the combination of classroom and independent study or lab settings in which ASE and ESL clients are most likely to thrive.

Additional Program-Related Predictors: Three additional program variables predict persistence for two of the three instructional components. Class size, for example, is a predictor of persistence for ESL and ABE clients but is not for clients in ASE. ESL clients are more likely to persist when enrolled in large classes, whereas ABE students are more likely to persist in classes of medium to large size (more than 10 clients).

Having at least one full-time administrator **and** one full-time instructional staff member associated with the program is a strong predictor of persistence for ESL and ASE clients. We suspect that having such a staff configuration increases the quality of instructional staff training, supervision, and support, which we assume should also be the case for ABE.

The cost of instruction was also found to be related to persistence but in somewhat surprising ways. To estimate the cost of providing instruction, the evaluation collected information by mail survey from all participating programs on the cost of service provision. In addition, there was a special cost study consisting of case studies of 12 programs selected to be nationally representative in terms of number of clients served, size of annual budget, type of sponsoring institution, and geographic region. On the basis of the case studies and survey data, we estimate that the mean cash cost per hour of instruction is $4.57. For the purposes of the analyses of persistence and learning gains presented in this report, we categorized programs in terms of cost as "average," "above average," and "below average" on the basis of one standard deviation above or below the mean hourly cost (σ = $2.80).

Spending more per hour of instruction is not positively related to persistence. But even though cost per seat hour is not a predictor of persistence for ESL, it is predictive of learning gains. Similarly, although low cost per seat hour is predictive of persistence for ASE clients, high cost per hour is predictive of instructional gains. For ABE, average costs are predictive of persistence, but persistence per se is not predictive of learning gains. These findings relative to cost per hour may be a reflection of instructional environment and staff configurations. What seems to be important is how money is spent, not the amount.

Personal Predictors: In addition to these program factors, two personal characteristics predict client persistence: race/ethnicity and age. Race/ethnicity predicts persistence in all three program components. In ABE and ASE, Asians/Pacific Islanders are more likely to persist than non-Hispanic whites. In addition, Hispanics are more likely to persist in ABE than non-Hispanic whites. In the ESL component, non-Hispanic whites are more likely to persist than Hispanics. Also, age is not a substantial predictor of persistence for clients enrolled in ASE or ESL; but ABE clients over the age of 30 are more likely to persist than younger clients.

For all instructional components, the following personal variables are not predictors of persistence: sex, marital status, welfare status, prior education, whether enrollment was required or voluntary, and the client's primary purpose for enrolling.

Section 3:
Benefits of Program Participation

What Are the Program's Educational Benefits?

The evaluation collected information on five measures of educational gain: reading achievement test scores, advancement in instructional placement, client self-reported gains, completion of secondary school, and continuation of education after leaving the adult education program.

Objective Measures of Reading Achievement: As noted in exhibit 3.1, participants in the federal Adult Education Program who stayed long enough to be given pre- and posttests significantly increased their reading achievement levels.

- **ESL gains.** ESL clients with valid pre- and post-test scores gained a mean of 5 scale-score points on the CASAS reading test. The tested ESL clients received a mean of 120 hours of instruction (between the pretest and posttest) and attended classes for an average of 14 weeks. As a group, ESL clients began instruction with low literacy skills and would generally have been capable of holding only entry-level jobs. Their posttest performance suggests that, as a group, they had improved their reading skills in functionally useful ways and would be capable of holding jobs, or participating in job training, requiring the comprehension of simple text information.

- **ABE gains.** ABE clients with valid pre- and post-test scores gained a mean of 15 scale-score points on the TABE reading comprehension test. The tested ABE students received a mean of 84 hours of instruction (between pretest and posttest) and attended classes for an average of 15 weeks. The reading ability of the ABE clients at the beginning of instruction was equivalent to that of an elementary school student at the beginning of the sixth grade (GE = 6.1). After instruction, ABE students were reading at a level equivalent to that of a student at the end of the first semester of seventh grade (GE = 7.4).

- **ASE gains.** ASE clients with valid pre- and post-test scores gained a mean of 7 scale-score points on the TABE reading comprehension test. The tested ASE clients received a mean of 63 hours of instruction and attended class for an average of 11 weeks. The ASE clients generally entered adult education with the reading ability of a secondary school student at about the mid-point of the eighth-grade school year (GE = 8.5). ASE students were reading at a ninth-grade level following instruction (GE = 9.3).

Exhibit 3.1
Mean Test Scores and Gains for ESL, ABE, and ASE Clients

Analysis Group	Test	N	Pretest		Posttest		Gain	
			Mean	(σ)	Mean	(σ)	Mean	(σ)
ESL	CASAS	347	207	(15)	212	(15)	5	(10)
ABE	TABE	110	728	(38)	743	(31)	15	(23)
ASE	TABE	154	755	(19)	762	(17)	7	(14)

σ = Standard deviation

Factors Directly Influencing Reading Achievement: Reading scores were influenced largely by different factors in each of the three adult education components. The closest the data come to offering a common prescription for effective program practices is in the area of cost. Higher cost per student-hour of instruction was found to be positively related to client learning gains for both ESL and ASE.

Except for ESL, there was no direct relationship between client persistence in the program and gains in test scores. The average amount of instruction received by ABE and ASE students was substantially less than that receive by ESL clients, and apparently insufficient to influence literacy outcomes. With respect to ASE, we suspect that many clients who enroll to prepare for the GED quickly discover they already have the requisite skills and for these clients the program serves more as a credentialing than as an educational function.[4]

Factors directly influencing ESL Posttest performance

- **Entering English reading ability.** Almost half of the variance (48 percent) of the posttest reading achievement of ESL students is accounted for by their initial level of English reading achievement.

- **Cost per seat hour.** Clients attending high-cost programs (i.e., greater than $4.57 per client per hour of instruction) do better than students attending average-cost programs, and students in average-cost programs do better than those in low-cost programs.

- **Total hours of instruction.** ESL clients who attend longer score better. On average and everything else being equal, the unique contribution of

[4] Some 28 percent of ASE clients who were pretested (*N*=2250) scored at the 12.9 grade level on the TABE. This suggests that they entered the program with skills roughly equivalent to those students completing high school or passing the GED.

program attendance (as measured by total hours of instruction) is an increase of 1 scale-score point on the CASAS reading test for approximately 40 hours of ESL instruction.

Factors directly influencing ABE posttest performance

- **Entering English reading ability.** Over half of the variance (61 percent) of the posttest reading achievement of ABE students is accounted for by their initial level of English reading achievement.

- **Voluntary attendance.** Posttest reading performance is significantly lower for ABE clients who were required to attend adult education than for those who enrolled voluntarily. ABE clients required to enroll in adult education are about twice as likely to be welfare recipients as ABE students who enroll voluntarily.

- **Full-time staff.** ABE clients in programs having at least one full-time administrator and one full-time member on the instructional staff score significantly higher on the TABE posttest than ABE clients in programs that did not.

- **Individualized curricula**. Clients in ABE programs offering highly individualized curricula score significantly higher on the TABE posttest than ABE students enrolled in programs described by staff as offering less individualized or more structured curricula.

- **Classroom plus laboratory environment.** The data suggest that positive outcomes for ABE clients are facilitated by instruction combining time in a classroom with time in a learning laboratory setting. Posttest reading achievement decreased with increasing amounts of instruction in classroom-only or laboratory-only settings, but not in an integrated environment.

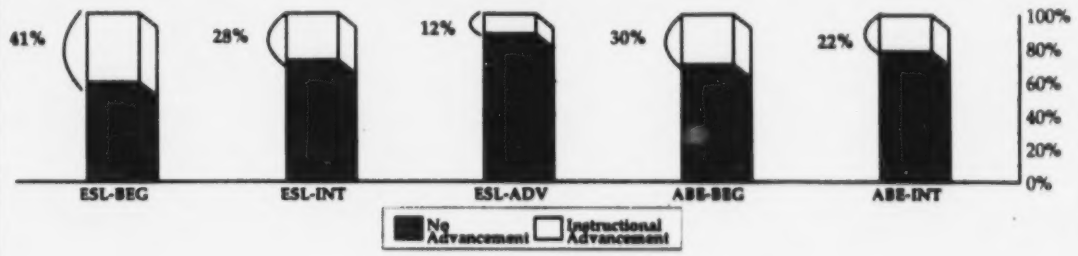
Factors directly influencing ASE posttest performance

- **Entering English reading ability.** Entering student ability as measured by pretest score was found to have a relatively small effect on ASE outcomes, accounting for approximately 19 percent of the variance of ASE client posttest reading achievement on average.

- **Cost per seat hour.** Clients attending high-cost programs (i.e., greater than $4.57 per client per hour of instruction) do better than students attending average-cost programs, and students in average-cost programs do better than those in low-cost programs.

Advances in Educational Placement: Overall, about 34 percent of ESL and ABE clients were advanced at least one instructional level by their program during the study's 18-month tracking period. Because ASE is the highest instructional level, these clients could not advance. In general, placement changes were greater for beginning than intermediate or advanced placement students. As exhibit 3.2 shows, 41 percent of the beginning ESL students and 30 percent of the beginning ABE students advanced in placement level during the course of the study.

Exhibit 3.2
Changes in Instructional Placement



Client Perceptions of Skill Improvement: Improving their literacy skills is a basic motivation for most clients who enroll in adult education. In the follow-up survey, former clients were asked to rate the degree to which adult education had helped (a lot, somewhat, or not at all) to improve their skills in areas they had rated as very important when they enrolled. As shown in exhibit 3.3, a majority of clients believe they were helped "a lot" in at least one of the three basic skills areas rated as very important to them; overall, 64 percent of these clients said they had been helped "a lot" by adult education instruction.

Exhibit 3.3
Proportion of Clients Saying That Adult Education Had Helped Them "a Lot" in Basic Skills Rated as Very Important
(*N* = 3,803*)

Basic Skill Areas	Percent of Clients			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Overall
Reading and writing	44 %	50 %	45 %	46 %
Mathematics	26	51	49	42
Speaking and listening	48	48	45	47
Total helped in at least one skill area	62	68	63	64

* This reflects the number of clients in the follow-up sample who indicated at enrollment that a particular skill area was **very important** to them.

Comparison of Client Perceptions with Actual Test Results: Client opinion about improvement in basic reading skills was consistent with test score gains in most cases. As shown in exhibit 3.4, client perception and test score gains in the area of reading improvement converged[5] for the majority of ABE, ASE, and ESL students for whom both test score and follow-up interview data were available. Although the number of cases available for comparison is small, we are able to reject the hypothesis that the results, across the three instructional groups, are due to chance.

Exhibit 3.4
Consistency Between Client Perceptions And Test Score Data Regarding Improvement in Basic Reading Skills
(N = 405)

Consistency Category	ABE *N* = 126	ASE *N* = 196	ESL *N* = 83	Total *N* = 405
Divergence	40%	45%	40%	42%
Convergence	60%	55%	60%	58%

Completion of Secondary Education: A legislative purpose of the Adult Education Act is to "enable adults who so desire to continue their education to at least the level of completion of secondary school." Depending on the criteria used, an estimated 11 to 28 percent of the ASE participants had completed their secondary school education within 6 months after leaving the program. Of ASE clients who began instruction without a high school diploma,

[5] Convergence was defined as a match between client opinion of whether the program helped "a lot" in improving their reading or writing skills and a reading test score gain. A match was also scored if the client said the program helped them "somewhat" or "not at all" and their test score gain was zero or negative. Divergence was defined as a lack of a match between client opinion and test score change (e.g., positive opinion and negative or zero test gain).

11 percent were enrolled in post-secondary education and an additional 19 percent had plans to do so within the next year.

From a different perspective, some 39 percent of the ASE clients in the follow-up study reported that they left adult education because they had completed the program. Assuming these clients took the GED test and that their success rate was the same as the average of all those taking the test,[6] approximately 27 percent of the ASE participants may be assumed to have passed the GED, thereby signifying completion of secondary education.

Continuing Education: To assess the extent to which the continuing education purpose of the Act was being accomplished, former clients were asked whether they were currently attending any educational class or training program and if they had plans to do so in the future. Approximately 17 percent of the clients were continuing their education 6 months after having left the federal Adult Education Program. Seven percent of clients continuing their education were taking community or regular college classes or were enrolled in vocational or job training programs. Of those who were continuing, ESL students were primarily pursuing further English language instruction, and about half of the ABE students were enrolled in GED preparation courses. Most of the former ASE students who were continuing their education were taking community or regular college classes, or enrolled in vocational or job training courses.

With respect to future plans, 72 percent of clients said they had plans to continue their education. Almost half of the former clients (46 percent) said they intended to continue their education in some fashion during the present year and another 26 percent planned to pursue further education the following year.

What Types of Employment-Related Benefits Did Clients Receive?

Information was gathered from respondents to the follow-up survey on changes in employment status and on whether the clients believed that participation in the program had benefitted them in various ways with respect to employment. Enhancing their employability skills was a greater motivation for enrolling in adult education among ESL clients than among clients in ABE or ASE, and consistent with that motivation ESL clients are those who most often indicated employment-related benefits from program participation.

The employment status at the time of enrollment of clients who responded to the follow-up survey is shown in exhibit 3.5. A plurality of the new clients were employed when they began instruction. ESL clients were more likely to be employed at the time of enrollment than were ABE or ASE clients.

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[6] According to the GED Testing Service, about 71 percent of all those who completed the full GED test battery during 1993 successfully passed the test.

Exhibit 3.5
Labor Force Status of the Follow-up Sample
At Enrollment in Adult Education

Status at Intake	ABE	ASE	ESL	Total
Employed	41%	42%	48%	44%
Unemployed	26%	29%	19%	25%
Not in Labor Force	33%	29%	33%	32%
Sample Size	*N* = 1096	*N* = 1696	*N* = 1596	*N* = 4388

Exhibit 3.6 provides a summary of the before-and-after employment status of the follow-up sample. Cell A indicates that 13 percent of all clients were employed at program intake, but were not working 6 months after they left adult education. Cell B shows that 50 percent of all clients were employed at intake and were also employed six months after leaving the program. Cell C indicates that 18 percent of all clients were unemployed at intake and were also unemployed six months after leaving the program. Finally, Cell D shows that 19 percent of all clients were unemployed at intake, but were employed six months after leaving the program. Overall, 63 percent were employed before entering the program, and 69 percent were employed at the time of follow-up, six months after leaving the program. This is a six percentage point increase in employment rate, a statistically significant increase.

Exhibit 3.6
Change in Employment Status

	After				
At Intake	Not employed		Employed		
Employed	(A)	13 %	(B)	50 %	63 %
Unemployed	(C)	18 %	(D)	19 %	37 %
		31 %		69 %	100 %

Clients Who Became Employed (Cell D): Clients who were unemployed at enrollment but who became employed 6 months after leaving adult education (19 percent of the clients in the labor force at intake) were asked in the follow-up interview whether what they had learned in the program had helped them get their job. Most (57 percent) of these respondents indicated that program participation had not been instrumental in their obtaining employment. This was the case for 64 percent of clients in ABE and 62 percent of those in ASE, but only for 33 percent in ESL. That is, two-thirds of the ESL respondents claimed that what they had learned in adult education had made a difference in their becoming employed.

Clients Who Remained Employed (Cell B):. Clients who were employed at intake and who were still employed 6 months after leaving adult education (50 percent of those in the labor force at intake) were asked a number of questions about whether program participation had benefitted their employment situation. Clients who still held the same job as when they enrolled, for example, were asked whether what they had learned in

the program had been helpful to them in that job. Overall, 61 percent replied affirmatively. ESL clients (88 percent) benefitted the most. Program participation was as likely as not to benefit ABE students (44 percent), and a majority of ASE students (60 percent) indicated that program participation had not helped them in their job.

Clients Who Were Employed but Had Changed to Another Job After Leaving Adult Education (Cell B): These clients were asked whether what they had learned in adult education had helped them to get a better job than the one they had before enrolling in the program. Overall, 59 percent reported that what they learned in the program helped them get a better job. Again the positive responses come mostly from clients who were enrolled in ESL (80 percent). The program was as likely as not to have helped ABE students to get a better job (53 percent), and most of the ASE students who reported changing jobs indicated that the program had not helped them get a better job (44 percent indicated they had been helped).

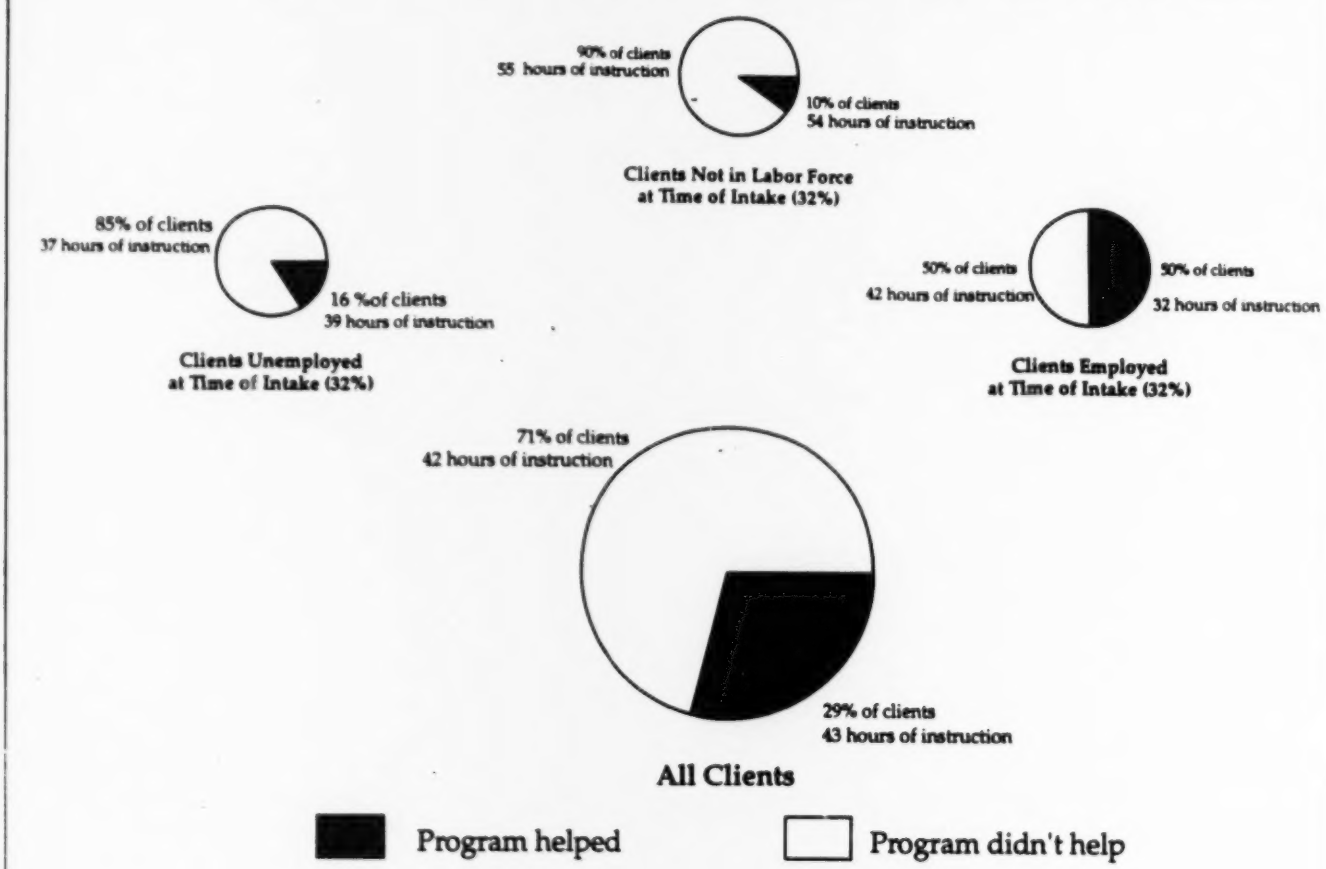
Clients Who Were Still Not Working (Cell C): Some of the clients who were not working but in the labor force when they enrolled in the program and who were not working at the time of the follow-up contact had worked at some time during the 6-month period following their program participation. These clients were asked in the follow-up interview whether what they had learned in the program had helped them get a job. Only 28 percent indicated that it had.

Clients Who Became Unemployed (Cell A): Some 13 percent of the clients who were employed when they enrolled were not employed after leaving the program. Although not working at the time of the follow-up interview, some of these clients had worked at some time after leaving the program. These clients were asked whether what they had learned in the program had helped them with respect to their post-program employment situation. Overall, this group was about as likely as not to report they had benefitted from adult education with respect to their employability; 56 percent said they had benefitted. Again, the most positive group was clients who had enrolled in ESL. Some 82 percent of those in ESL, as opposed to 45 percent in ABE and 36 percent in ASE, indicated that what they learned in the program had helped them with a job.

Summary by Labor Market Status: Exhibit 3.7 summarizes the extent to which clients in the three labor market categories (employed, unemployed, and not in the labor market) report that they benefitted from participation in the program. As the pie chart data show, employment-related benefits are directly proportional to one's initial orientation to the labor market. That is, employability was most often enhanced for those who were employed when they enrolled in adult education. At the other extreme, employability was enhanced the least for those not in the labor force at intake. All together, approximately 29 percent of the clients in the follow-up sample claimed that participation in adult education had improved their employment situation.

Exhibit 3.7

Proportion of Clients Reporting That What They Learned Helped Their Employment Situation and the Median Hours of Instruction They Received


90% of clients
55 hours of instruction
10% of clients
54 hours of instruction
Clients Not in Labor Force at Time of Intake (32%)
85% of clients
37 hours of instruction
16 %of clients
39 hours of instruction
Clients Unemployed at Time of Intake (32%)
50% of clients
42 hours of instruction
50% of clients
32 hours of instruction
Clients Employed at Time of Intake (32%)
71% of clients
42 hours of instruction
29% of clients
43 hours of instruction
All Clients
Program helped
Program didn't help

Did the Program Help Clients Achieve Other Goals?

Adult learners typically entered adult education with multiple motives. In the telephone follow-up survey, clients who had indicated that they sought to feel better about themselves, contribute more to their family and community, help their children with schoolwork, become less dependent on others for help, or make others feel better about them were asked to indicate the extent to which the program had helped them reach these goals ("a lot," "somewhat," or "not at all"). A summary of their responses is presented in exhibit 3.8. On the whole, most clients reported that the program helped "a lot" with achieving one or more of these goals.

Exhibit 3.8
Proportion of Clients Reporting That the Program Had Helped "a Lot" As Related to Different Reasons for Enrolling in Adult Education

Reasons for Enrolling Rated as Very Important at Intake	Percent of Clients Saying the Program Helped "A Lot"			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Total
Feel better about myself (*N* = 4513)	62 %	68 %	66 %	65 %
Make others feel better about me (*N* = 2785)	49	50	50	50
Contribute to my family and community (*N* = 4011)	50	46	40	46
Be less dependent on others for help (*N* = 3973)	47	44	44	45
Help my children with their schoolwork (*N* = 3095)	31	38	33	33
Total helped in one area or more (*N* = 3257)	70 %	70 %	68 %	70 %

Reading to Young Children: To assess whether the program resulted in an increase in the frequency of reading to children, clients were asked at intake whether children under the age of 6 were in the home and, if so, how often the client read to or with them ("almost never," "about once or twice a week," "about once a week," or "nearly every day"). These questions were asked again in the telephone follow-up. The results are presented in exhibit 3.9.

Exhibit 3.9
Proportion of Clients Reporting Changes in How Often They Read to or with Their Children Between Intake and Telephone Follow-up
(*N* = 1,290)

Change in Reading Frequency Between Intake and Follow-up	Percent of Clients			
	ABE	ASE	ESL	Overall
More often	38 %	32 %	27 %	32 %
The same	50	56	46	51
Less often	12	12	27	17
Net increase	26 %	20 %	0 %	15 %

Overall, 32 percent reported reading to, or with, young children more often at follow-up than at intake while 17 percent reported reading to, or with, these children less often at follow-up than at intake, for a net increase of 15 percent in the number of clients reading more frequently with young children. Some 26 percent of ABE clients and 20 percent of ASE clients increased their reading involvement with young children, but there was no overall change in the ESL group.

What Percent of Clients Report Benefits Related to the Purposes of the Act?

Based on the preceding analyses of client outcomes related to basic education skills, employment, and continuing education, exhibit 3.10 provides estimates of the aggregate proportion of former clients who indicated that they benefitted from participation in adult education with respect to the three purposes of the Adult Education Act. The summary data in the top half of the exhibit pertaining to each of the three purposes of the legislation show that the federal Adult Education Program benefits clients primarily in the area of improving basic education skills.

Exhibit 3.10
Proportion of Clients Benefitting in One or More of the Ways Identified in the Legislation
(*N* = 4,653)

Legislation Purpose	Percent of Clients Benefiting			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Overall
Basic education skills	60 %	61 %	53 %	58 %
Employment	35	23	24	29
Continuing education	4	5	11	7
Benefitted in at least one purpose of Act	75	71	66	70
Benefitted in at least two purposes of Act	27	25	23	25
Benefitted in all three purposes of Act	1	1	1	1

As indicated by the bottom half of the exhibit, most clients benefit from adult education primarily in one of the three areas specified by the legislation, and for most this is in the area of basic education skills. While a quarter of all participants did benefit from program participation with respect to at least two of the purposes specified by the legislation (most often improvements in basic education skills and employability), it was rare for clients to benefit in all three areas targeted by the Adult Education Act.

In exhibit 3.11, clients in the telephone survey who benefitted from program participation in at least one of the three areas specified in the legislation are compared with clients who did not achieve any benefits from participating in adult education; the comparison is based on median hours of instruction and median weeks of enrollment. For clients in all three instructional components, data show that the amount of instruction is greater for clients who benefitted from program participation compared to their counterparts who did not achieve benefits from participation. However, one can not tell from these data whether clients benefitted from participation because they received a greater amount of instruction or whether those who benefitted simply elected to continue their participation longer for whatever reason.

Exhibit 3.11
Relationship of Amount of Instruction
To Reported Benefits of Participating in Adult Education
(*N* = 4,653)

Composite Measure of One or More Benefits: Basic Skills, Employment, Continuing Education.	Median Hours of Instruction		Median Weeks of Enrollment	
	Benefitted	No Benefit	Benefitted	No Benefit
ESL Component	60	48	10	9
ABE Component	45	20	12	6
ASE Component	36	20	10	6
Overall	48	27	10	7

Section 4:
Program Impact on the National Literacy Problem

Who Comprises the Target Population for Adult Education?

The Adult Education Act authorizes instructional services for adults who: are not enrolled, or required to be enrolled, in secondary school; lack sufficient mastery of basic educational skills to enable them to function effectively in society; do not a have secondary education graduation certificate or its equivalent; and lack basic English language speaking, reading, or writing skills. A narrower definition which can be related to data from the US census is: persons age 16 and older who have not completed secondary school or its equivalent, and who are not currently enrolled in school, or who have a diploma but indicated in the 1990 census that they do not speak English "very well." Using this definition, over one-fourth (27 percent) of the total adult population in the United States falls into this category.[7]

- Some 39 percent of the target population are located in the South, 21 percent in the North Central region, 20 percent in the Northeast, and 20 percent in the West.
- Most of the target population (57 percent) have completed 9 to 12 years of school, and 38 percent have less than a 9th grade education.
- Within the target population, about 26 percent speak English as a second language.
- Approximately 41 percent of the target population are 60 years of age or older, 28 percent are 25 to 44, 20 percent are 45 to 59, and 11 percent are 16 to 24.
- Estimates by racial/ethnic groups indicate that 64 percent of the target population are white, 16 percent black, 15 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 2 percent American Indian/Alaskan Native.
- In terms of the program's major instructional components, 48 percent are eligible for ASE, 27 percent for ESL and 25 percent for ABE.

The adult secondary education target population (adults who have completed 9 to 12 years of school but have not received a diploma or its equivalent) is largest for the

[7] Target population estimates for the adult education program were computed by Research Triangle Institute using data from the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the 1990 Census of Population and Housing [Thorn and Fleenor 1993].

United States as a whole and for three of the four census regions. In the West, the ESL target population is the largest, but just slightly larger than the ASE target population for that region (exhibit 4.1).

Exhibit 4.1
Estimates of Target Population by Region and Instructional Component

Region	Adult Education Target Population			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Total
USA	12,323,000	11,546,000	22,341,000	46,210,000
North Central	1,392,000	2,884,000	5,515,000	9,791,000
Northeast	3,148,000	1,911,000	4,304,000	9,363,000
South	3,216,000	5,619,000	9,145,000	17,980,000
West	4,567,000	1,132,000	3,377,000	9,076,000

Note: The target population estimates for ABE and ASE exclude all adults age 16 and older who have a high school diploma or the equivalent or who are enrolled in school. The Adult Education Act permits serving these adults if they meet the criteria of need. The target population for ESL is defined as adults who speak English as a second language and who indicated on the 1990 U.S. census that they do not speak English "very well."

What Are the Rates of Participation by Region and Instructional Component?

Exhibit 4.2 presents participation rates using target population estimates and the number of active first-year clients. The rate of participation is the number of new clients for every 1,000 eligible persons. In general, the exhibit shows highest rates of new clients in the ESL component and the lowest in the ASE component. Regionally, rates of participation are highest in the West and lowest in the Northeast. New-client rates across the United States range from a low of 12 persons for every 1,000 eligible for ASE in the Northeast to a high of 134 for ESL in the western states.

Exhibit 4.2
Rates of Participation in Adult Education
By Region and Instructional Component

Region	Rates of Participation			
	ESL	ABE	ASE	Total
USA	66	23	17	32
North Central	49	27	18	25
Northeast	13	19	12	13
South	30	24	17	22
West	134	16	20	77

Note: New-client rates of participation among 1,000 eligible persons for adult education programs in 1990 excluding ABE and ASE clients who have a high school diploma or the equivalent or who are enrolled in school.

How Large are the Annual Additions to the Target Population?

Estimating annual additions to the program's target population involves using census and other available data and making a number of steady-state assumptions (e.g., no dramatic changes in the patterns of school completion or the immigration of non-English speakers in the past several years). Exhibit 4.3 provides a summary of these estimates. As the exhibit shows, the estimated additions to the target population for the adult education program amount to about 1.5 million persons a year, with the annual increase being the greatest for ESL (643,000), followed by ASE (590,000) and ABE (214,000).

How Do Program Successes Compare with New Additions to the Target Population?

A central purpose of this study was to assess the potential of programs funded under the Adult Education Act to significantly reduce the literacy needs of the target population. This assessment is made by comparing estimates of the annual additions to the target population with estimates of the number of clients who received sufficient hours of instruction to be counted as program successes, or subtractions from the program's target population.

It should be noted that we are not estimating *net* annual changes in the program's target population. Specifically, subtractions attributable to mortality, the efforts of adult

education programs not receiving federal funding, and literacy gains achieved by wholly informal means are not considered in the analysis.[8]

Exhibit 4.3
Estimated Annual Additions to the Target Population

Instructional Component	Basis for Estimate	Number of Adults
ASE addition[a]	Number of new high school dropouts plus number of new high school graduates not continuing their education and estimated to read below an 8th grade level.	590,000
ABE addition[b]	Number of new grade school dropouts, plus allowance for immigrants of all ages with no high school education who have just gained sufficient proficiency in English to benefit from ABE instruction.	214,000
ESL addition[c]	Number of all who immigrated to U.S. from non-English speaking countries.	643,000
Total	Sum of ASE, ABE and ESL	1,447,000

[a] The average number of high school dropouts per year for 1990-1992 was 359,000 (NCES Dropout Rates in the United States: 1992). For the same period the U.S. Department of Education reports the average number of high school graduates per year was 2.26 million. According to the 1985 Young Adult Literacy Survey (Kirsh, et. al), 40 percent of high school graduates do not go on to college, and 27 percent of these graduates read below an 8th grade level (231,000).

[b] Estimated from census data to be about 109,000 new grade school drop outs, plus about 1/15th of the total number who speak a non-English language at home and completed less than 9 years of school and report speaking English less than "very well" (1/15th of 1,573,000 = 105,000).

[c] The average number of persons who immigrated to the U.S. per year during the 5 years prior to the 1990 census, excluding those who were under 18 years old, is 699,000; the proportion of immigrants to the U.S. from non-English-speaking countries between 1980 and 1990 was 92 percent (U.S. census data).

[8] Mortality is probably the largest annual subtraction from the ABE target population, since 22 percent of the 17.4 million adults with less than 9 years of education are age 75 or over. Annual mortality in this group amounts to about 8 percent, or about 312,000 deaths each year. (*March 1993 Current Population Survey Report on Educational Attainment; Statistical Abstract of the United States: U.S. Death Rates by Age.*)

What Are the Estimated Numbers of Program Successes?

Establishing a basis for estimating the number of clients who received sufficient instructional services to have had their literacy needs significantly reduced is problematic. The data available from the national evaluation do not provide as clear a basis as one might wish. When the study was designed, the plan was to use the results of the analyses of reading achievement tests as the basis for this analysis. However, programs were generally unable to provide valid pre- and posttest scores on clients participating in the study, and analyses of the relatively small number of achievement test scores do not support their use as indicators of literacy-needs reduction. Consequently, the time required for clients to move from one instructional level to the next was used as an alternative.

Measures of Instructional Advancement: Using advancement in instructional placement as an indicator of reduced literacy needs requires deciding how far clients should advance. For ABE and ESL, there are two reasonable alternatives:

- **Moving up one instructional level**. For ABE this is going from the beginning level to the intermediate or from the intermediate to ASE; for ESL it is going from the beginning level to intermediate or from the intermediate level to advanced.

- **Attaining an advanced level which meets the intention of the Act**. For ABE that is going to ASE; for ESL it is going from either beginning or intermediate to advanced.

For ASE and most clients in advanced ESL, there is no higher instructional level, so the following measures were used:

- **For ASE, the respondents' indication that they had terminated their instruction "satisfied because they had completed the program."** The adult education program's instruction terminates with high school completion or its equivalency, so for ASE it is reasonable to use an indicator of program completion. The telephone follow-up survey obtained information on the reasons clients terminate instruction, including whether the client left "because they had completed the program."

- **For advanced ESL clients, all clients.** There is no clear end point for clients enrolled at the ESL-Advanced level. Since it can be reasonably argued that the purposes of the Act with respect to citizenship and employability require that all ESL clients attain at least the level of advanced ESL but that requirements thereafter are dependent entirely on the needs of each individual, it was decided to count all clients who received any instruction at the advanced level of ESL as program successes.

Exhibit 4.4 shows the movement of new clients with one or more hour of instruction from their initial instructional placement to their placement at the time they left the program. It shows, for example, that about 59 percent of the clients who began instruction at the beginning ESL level remained at that level of instruction, while 28 percent moved to the intermediate level and 12 percent moved to the advanced level by the time they left the program.

As exhibit 4.4 also shows, about 1 percent of the ESL-Beginning, 5 percent of the ESL-Intermediate, and 12 percent of the ESL-Advanced clients had moved to ABE or ASE instruction by the time they exited the program. Thus, the target population for ABE and ASE is augmented each year by about 3 percent of the clients whose initial instructional placement is in ESL. This amounts to an annual addition of about 16,300 to the ABE/ASE target group.

Exhibit 4.4
Placement of ESL and ABE Clients When Leaving by Placement at Time of Entry

Instructional Component	Percent of Clients				
	ESL-Beg	ESL-Int	ESL-Adv	ABE-Beg	ABE-Int
ESL-Beginning	59.0%	-	-	0.3%	0.2%
ESL-Intermediate	28.0	72.0%	-	0.7	0.4
ESL-Advanced	12.0	23.0	88.0%	0.7	0.3
ABE-Beginning	0.3	1.0	3.0	70.0	-
ABE-Intermediate	0.1	2.0	5.0	18.0	78
ASE	0.9	2.0	4.0	11.0	21
Total Number	438,285	87,382	51,478	70,773	114,251

Number of Hours Needed to Advance: To operationalize these indicators, the median number of hours clients received instruction between the time of the clients' initial hour of instruction and the end of the study reporting period in which they advanced were calculated. This results in a somewhat generous estimate of the number of successes, since the time needed for clients who had not advanced by the end of the study could not be included in the calculations.[9] Clients who went backward (e.g., from intermediate to beginning levels) were excluded from the analyses because we assumed they were initially misplaced.

[9] Since the calculations are based on clients who did advance, only about 25 percent of ABE and 37 percent of ESL, and the time needed for clients who had not advanced by the end of the study could not be included in the calculations, they provide an underestimate of the number of hours needed by most clients to advance.

To determine the number of new clients to which these hour thresholds should apply, each instructional group was treated separately; that is, the number of new clients in each level was calculated and the appropriate number of hours for that group was applied. The median number of hours to advance by instructional level for ABE and ESL clients are shown in exhibit 4.5. ASE clients who reported they terminated instruction because they completed the program received a median of 45 hours of instruction.

Estimated Annual Program Impact: Exhibit 4.6 presents the estimated annual impact on the increase in the program's target population. The size of the annual increase in the ABE and ESL target population by instructional placement level (i.e., beginning, intermediate, or advanced) was estimated by allocating the estimates of annual additions to the target population presented in exhibit 4.2 by the proportion of new client placements at each subcomponent level. Of the ABE clients who received one hour or more of instruction, 42 percent were initially placed in ABE-Beginning and 58 percent in ABE-Intermediate. Of the ESL clients with one hour of instruction or more, 74 percent were initially placed in ESL-Beginning, 16 percent in ESL-Intermediate, and 10 in ESL-Advanced.

Exhibit 4.5
Median Number of Hours for ABE and ESL Clients to Complete 1 or More Instructional Levels

Instructional Component	Median Number of Hours Needed to Complete
ABE Beginning	32
ABE Intermediate	36
Beginning and Intermediate ABE	65
ESL Beginning	216
ESL Intermediate	136
Beginning and Intermediate ESL	372

A range of estimates indicating the extent to which the program is successful in minimizing the annual increase of the ABE, ASE, and ESL population with English literacy needs is presented in exhibit 4.6. The exhibit includes the results of applying both criteria for determining instructional advancement (i.e., advancing one instructional level or attaining ASE or ESL-Advanced); where these criteria produce different estimates, the table's rightmost column provides the range. As the exhibit shows, each year the program's successes amount to less than half the estimated additions. Overall, new additions to the program's target population exceed relatively generous estimates of program successes by about 800,000.

Exhibit 4.6
Estimated Annual Impact on Increases in the Adult Education Target Population Based on Program Advancement

Instructional Component and Level	Estimated Annual Additions to Target Population	Number of Clients Served by Program Who Attained Sufficient Instructional Hours to Reach ASE or Advanced ESL[a]	Number of Clients Served by Program Who Attained a Sufficient Number of Hours to Advance One Level[b]	Program Successes as a Percent of Estimated Annual Increases in Target Population
ABE: Total	**214,000**	**123,000**	**148,000**	**57 to 69%**
ABE: Beginning	90,000	39,000	63,000	43 to 70%
ABE:Intermediate	124,000	84,000	84,000	68%
ESL: Total	**643,000**	**273,000**	**343,000**	**30 to 53%**
ESL: Beginning	476,000	148,000	218,000	31 to 46%
ESL:Intermediate & Advanced	167,000	125,000	125,000	75%
ASE	**590,000**	**159,000**	**159,000**	**27%**
Total	**1,447,000**	**555,000**	**650,000**	**38 to 45%**

[a] **Defined For ABE**: 65 hours for those entering at ABE-Beginning to move to ASE and 36 hours for those entering at ABE-Intermediate to move to ASE. **For ESL** as: 372 hours for those entering at ESL-Beginning to move to ESL-Advanced, and 136 hours for those entering at ESL-Intermediate to move to ESL-Advanced. **For ASE**: for clients to report that they had completed the program (45 hours).

[b] **Defined for ABE**: for those entering at ABE-Beginning to move to ABE-Intermediate (32 hours), and for those entering at ABE-Intermediate to advance to ASE (36 hours). **For ESL**: for those entering at ESL-Beginning to move to ESL-Intermediate (216 hours), for those entering at ESL-Intermediate to move to ESL-Advanced (136 hours). **For ASE**: for clients to report that they had completed the program (45 hours).

Proportionately, the program's greatest area of impact is in the area of ABE, and it is having the least effect on stemming the annual growth in the number of potential clients for ASE. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, it should be noted that more than 40 percent of the adults eligible for program services are at least 60 years old and that of this group over 50 percent have less than a 9th grade education (i.e., are in the ABE target group). Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that in addition to services provided by the adult education program, the size of the ABE target population is also diminished considerably each year by the effects of clients' age. Looking toward the future, these analyses suggest that it would be appropriate to reconsider current legislative and programmatic limitations on the use of federal funds to serve clients in ASE.

What Is the Program's Capacity to Enroll Additional Clients?

Programs in the survey of all local providers (Universe Survey) were asked to report how many additional clients they could have served if those clients "had shown up at the right time." They were also asked the number of clients on waiting lists at the end of the 1990 program year and in mid-October 1990.

- About 59 percent of all programs reported that they could have been serving one or more additional clients (i.e., that they had capacity to spare).
- Most programs with additional capacity reported that they could serve fewer additional ESL clients than ABE or ASE clients.
- Conversely, about 16 percent of programs reported having clients on waiting lists at the end of June 1990, and 25 percent of the programs had clients on their waiting lists in mid-October 1990.

Exhibit 4.7 provides estimates for mid-October 1990 of the number of clients on waiting lists, the number of additional clients the program directors with waiting lists said they could currently be serving if the clients had shown up at the right time, the number of additional clients who could have been served by programs with or without waiting lists, and the number of clients they said were currently enrolled. There was little difference, overall or by component, between the end of program year and mid-October in terms of number of clients on the waiting lists (69,500 at the end of June and 63,600 in mid-October). As may be seen from the exhibit:

- Across all programs, the number of additional clients that directors say their programs could be serving is about 10 times greater than the number on waiting lists.
- Overall, the number of clients waiting to be served is about the same as the amount of the reported excess capacity in programs with waiting lists. However, within components, there are more ESL clients waiting to be served than there is excess capacity in programs with waiting lists. The opposite is true for ABE and ASE.
- Programs report that they could be serving almost half again (42 percent) more clients than they currently enroll.

The study data clearly indicate that the system has the capacity to serve additional clients. However, the extent to which serving those clients might require additional funding is not clear. Responses from some program directors to the question about their ability to serve additional clients suggest that their estimates assumed some additional resources would be forthcoming.

Exhibit 4.7
Number of Clients on Waiting Lists and The Number That Programs Could Have Served and Were Serving

Number of Clients as of Mid-October 1990	ESL	ABE	ASE	Total
On waiting lists	40,800	13,200	9,600	63,600
Others who could have been served by programs with waiting lists	28,000	21,500	12,300	61,800
Others who could have been served by all programs	141,700	361,600	138,400	641,700
Total reported as being served	537,200	454,000	533,500	1,524,700

Section 5:
Major Conclusions, Implications, and Research Needs

Broadly, study findings show a continuing need for adult education services, that the program is serving the kinds of people it should be serving, that people who participate in the program generally benefit in one or more of the ways specified in the Adult Education Act, that services to clients need to be improved, and that the program needs better information management and reporting systems. There is also a need for more research and evaluation in the field.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

1. ***The program is not keeping up with the growth of its target population:*** The program's target population increases by about two-thirds more each year than the program is able to successfully serve, with the greatest area of unmet need being adult secondary education. Analyses of the 1990 census show that the target population for the adult education program as defined by federal legislation is about 46 million and the results of the recently released National Adult Literacy Survey[10] indicate that the English language literacy skills of persons with characteristics similar to the program's target population are low. Of the program's target group, 48 percent are eligible for ASE, 27 percent for ESL, and 25 percent for ABE. Data collected for this study indicate that during the 1992 program year, the program served between 2.6 and 3.2 million clients, about 51 percent of whom received instruction in ESL, 30 percent in ASE, and 19 percent in ABE. Thus, one may reasonably conclude that there is a continuing need for adult education services.

2. ***Most clients are enrolled in ESL, but most programs primarily serve clients enrolled in ABE, while the largest segment of the target population are clients who are eligible for ASE:*** ESL accounts for 51 percent of the clients receiving services and 76 percent of the hours of instruction received. However, ABE clients are the largest of the three groups in 48 percent of programs (ESL is predominant in only 21 percent) and 32 percent of programs report they serve no ESL students at all. The ASE target population is almost twice the size of either the ABE or the ESL target groups and is growing annually about as much as ESL. Over 20 years ago, when the program began, ESL constituted a very small percentage of the client population, but since 1979 the proportion of ESL clients served by the program has more than doubled. However, those responsible for policy making and program direction at the federal and state levels are, for the most

[10] Kirsh, et al. (1993). Adult Literacy in America: A First Look at the Results of the National Adult Literacy Survey. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

part, more interested and experienced in ABE/ASE than ESL.[11] Some have suggested that there seems to be a gap between the language and culture of the federal program and the changing characteristics of the clients it serves.

3. ***The clients served by the program are appropriate in terms of the target population as specified in the Adult Education Act, but there may be a tendency to serve those who are easiest to reach:*** The Adult Education Act was intended to assist adults who lack the literacy skills needed for effective citizenship and productive employment. The study's data show that the characteristics of clients being served by local programs are generally consistent with the description of the program's target population set forth in the Act. Of clients receiving instruction in ESL, about 95 percent are from a home where a language other than English is spoken, and 46 percent were unemployed when they enrolled in the program. Of clients in ABE and ASE, more than 80 percent had no high school diploma or its equivalent when they enrolled, 61 percent were unemployed, and 35 percent were receiving public assistance.

In the early years of the program, some observers expressed concern that because it was so much easier for programs to serve people who beat at their doors, the needs of large numbers of other types of potential clients were not being met.[12] In the mid-1970s the concern was about overserving ASE clients at the expense of ABE. Today it is with ESL. Members of the ESL target group are highly motivated to enroll in services, and they tend to stay the longest once they begin. While there is no clear evidence that ESL clients are directly displacing those eligible for ABE or ASE, ESL participation rates are considerably higher than the rates for ABE or ASE in all regions of the country except the Northeast.

4. ***Most participants, especially those in ABE and ASE, stay in the program a very short time:*** Across the three instructional groups, clients who receive 1 or more hours of instruction (i.e., those who begin) receive a median of 58 hours of instruction over 24 weeks. Clients in ESL receive 113 hours of instruction and are enrolled for 30 weeks; those in ABE receive 35 hours over 20 weeks; and those in ASE receive 28 hours over 17 weeks. There are many reasons why adults do not stay longer in the program, and what amounts to a realistic expectation in this regard is not clear. One possible point of comparison is a community college course that meets for 3 or 4 hours each week over a period of about 13 weeks. Using that as a standard (i.e., 39 to 52 hours of instruction), ABE and ASE clients are receiving less than the equivalent of a one-semester course, whereas clients in ESL, on average, receive the equivalent of between two and three courses.

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[11] Chisman, et al. (1993). ESL and the American Dream. Washington, D.C.: The Southport Institute for Policy Analysis. p. 36.

[12] Mezirow, J., Darkenwald, G., and Knox, A. (1975). Last Gamble on Education. Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Society of the United States.

5. Clients' motives to enroll in adult education are related to client persistence and learning gains: Most clients have several reasons for enrolling in adult education, and for many no single reason is paramount. Generally, ESL clients are the most motivated by employment and economic related reasons. They are also the most likely to begin instruction after they enroll and they stay in the program the longest once they begin. Some ASE clients are motivated to attend in order to obtain a secondary school credential, and they leave the program as soon as they believe they are ready to pass the GED exam, which is sometimes after only a few hours of class. There is no strong relationship between client performance and required program attendance, however. Enrolling to comply with public welfare or other programs or because of employer requirements is not predictive of sustained program attendance or of learning gains.

6. The crucial time for programs to work with clients to sustain attendance appears to be during the first month of instruction: Overall, clients who begin instruction are likely to stay about 5.5 months. However, a client who begins the second month is likely to stay 8 months, an increase of 45 percent. After the second month, persistence rates increase steadily. Clients who begin the fifth month are likely to continue to complete 11 months of instruction.

7. Many adults who participate in the program benefit, but many leave the program before achieving measurable gains: The greatest benefits to clients who receive instruction are in the area of English language and other basic academic skills. Those that stay long enough to be given a pretest and posttest significantly increase their reading skills, and the majority of clients report they were helped "a lot" with respect to at least one area of basic skills. In addition, about a third of the clients indicate they benefit in some way in terms of employment, mostly by improving themselves on jobs they had when they enrolled. However, less than 40 percent of clients gave completing the instruction or achieving their personal goals as the reason they left the program. Almost half of those who begin instruction leave because of such reasons as employment, health, or child care problems.

8. To increase the likelihood that clients will remain in the program longer and increase the basic skills and employment-related benefits they receive, there are several steps the program should take: Although there is a positive relationship between length of attendance and outcomes, the relationship is complex and it is important not to equate persistent attendance with positive client results. In many respects, conclusions and recommendations about adult education should be couched in terms that distinguish among the three components. With that caveat in mind, client outcomes are likely to improve if programs:

- → have at least some full-time instructional and administrative staff;
- → provide at least four or five client support services;
- → give increased attention to helping clients continue beyond the initial month following their enrollment; and
- → identify and encourage the use of the most appropriate instructional structures and designs.

9. Many programs need to improve their information management and reporting systems: Few programs have client-based recordkeeping systems which enable them to keep track of individual enrollees for at least a year at a time. As a result, they can only estimate certain kinds of program statistics, and they are in a weak position to monitor and improve the services they provide. For example, although most programs know how many people they are serving on a given day or how many seat hours of instruction they have provided during the course of a year, many are not able to provide unduplicated counts of their clients across components or by time period (year or semester). Recently, the U.S. Department of Education has begun to provide technical assistance to states to improve their program recordkeeping and reporting. It is important that the local programs receive technical assistance as well. The local programs are the source of information the states receive, and they are in a position to directly use the information for improving the services clients receive.

10. There are no important differences between clients who receive between 1 and 12 hours of instruction and those who stay in the program longer: Current federal reporting procedures call for local programs to include only clients who receive 12 hours or more of instruction. This requirement has no empirical basis and adds substantially to the recordkeeping burden of local programs. Some clients, especially in ASE, accomplish their goals quickly. The study's analyses do not reveal systematic differences between clients with up to 12 hours of instruction and those who stay somewhat longer. A step toward improving the quality of federal data while at the same time lessening the burden on local programs would be to eliminate the current federal requirement.

11. Many programs need technical assistance in student assessment: The TABE, CASAS, and other achievement tests are widely used in adult education programs throughout the United States. About one-third of the achievement test data that local programs provided were invalid and could not be used in the final analyses. The problems with the data included administration of inappropriate forms of the tests, inaccurate recording of data, and administration of tests at inappropriate times (e.g., pretests administered after many weeks of program participation, or less than 5 instructional hours between pre- and posttesting). Discussions with local staff indicate widespread skepticism about the appropriateness of using these tests. Also, local programs have little appreciation of how they can use achievement test results to improve program effectiveness, or of how testing as part of a statewide general assessment system differs from testing for the purpose of assessing the effects of a program on a particular group of clients.

12. There are substantial differences between clients in ESL and those in ABE/ASE, and in the characteristics of local programs: Clients in ESL differ from clients in ABE/ASE with respect to personal characteristics, reasons for enrolling in the program, patterns of attendance, and the outcomes they achieve. Some programs serve several thousand clients a year while most serve several hundred or less. Some programs have at least a core of highly committed full-time administrative and instructional staff, but 36 percent of programs do not have any full-time staff at all. State and federal efforts to develop program effectiveness indicators should treat each component separately. Also, the

development and imposition of any new program or reporting requirement should take into account the limited staff resources at a great many local programs.

Future Research Needs

The 1989 amendments to the Adult Education Act, followed in 1991 by the National Literacy Act, ended more than a decade of minimal federal support for research and evaluation in adult education. This national evaluation is an early example of the fruits of the increased support.

Recommended further research relating to the principal findings of this report may be put into two categories: (1) further exploration of the richness of the national evaluation's data and (2) areas for new studies.

1. *Further Exploration of the National Evaluation's Data:*

- **Causal analyses of employment benefits.** The findings of the telephone survey indicate that about a third of all clients benefit from participation in terms of employment. It would be useful to explore in more depth than the time and resources of this study allowed the relationships among personal and program variables that are associated with positive employment gains.

- **More detailed analyses of the causes and consequences of client persistence.** The national evaluation's database provides a unique opportunity for detailed investigations of the relationship between various measures of client attendance (e.g., hours of instruction, length of enrollment, intensity of instruction) and other variables of interest. Using a logistic regression approach, the study's third interim report presented some in-depth assessments of persistence in terms of attendance quartiles. Also important would be analyses of the relationship between attendance and membership in subgroups based on personal or programmatic characteristics. The sample sizes for analyses of attendance data are sufficiently large that relatively elaborate models could be developed and tested.

- **More detailed analyses of staff configurations and characteristics.** Current analyses indicate that clients in ABE and ESL are more likely to benefit if they are in programs that have at least one full-time administrator and one full-time instructor on their staff. Analyses of other information in the study's database about staff characteristics, in-service training, and instructional design might provide additional insights and useful guidance for the field.

2. *Areas for New Studies:*

- **Controlled studies of learning gains that relate relatively fine-grained information about client characteristics and instructional practice to achievement.** The national evaluation did not gather detailed information about the kinds of instruction that clients received. The study focused on the amount of instruction, not on the specific ways in which instruction is implemented. Tightly controlled studies are needed to assess the relative effectiveness of different types of instruction for different types of clients.

- **Studies to determine optimal staffing patterns.** The national evaluation's data show that staff make a difference in terms of client outcomes. The presence of some full-time administrative and instructional staff is beneficial at least for clients in ABE and ESL, and some of the analyses suggest that having a majority of the instructional staff with more than 3 years of experience in adult education is beneficial as well. However, this study was not designed to explore staff-related issues in depth. Studies designed to identify the optimal staffing arrangements for different types of clients and program settings could result in increases in client accomplishments and could lead to more cost-effective program designs.

- **Studies to determine the relationship between recruitment approaches and the type(s) of clients served.** There is some concern that the high motivation of ESL clients, and to a lesser extent ASE clients, serves to limit the provision of services to equally needy but less informed or aggressive potential clients, such as those eligible for ABE. Studies assessing the relationship between client motivation and the intensity and techniques of client recruitment could address such equity concerns.

- **Special studies of ESL.** Given the importance of ESL in the program, the diversity of that client population, and the special issues associated with assessing second-language acquisition, a series of studies of the ESL adult program are needed. These might include, for example, an assessment of strategies for serving clients with different levels of prior education.

- **The coordination of ESL and other components.** Many programs are under great pressure to meet the obvious needs of adults with limited English-language proficiency, whereas it is often necessary for programs to actively recruit clients for ABE. There are also important differences in the most appropriate teaching methodologies for the three program components (ESL, ABE, and ASE). Finding ways to organize and manage local programs in order to meet the needs of all three target groups in the most cost-effective way is a subject of considerable importance.

- **Special studies of services for the learning disabled and the relationship of such clients to others the program must serve.** Assuming the program will continue to serve a relatively young clientele, it is likely that an increasingly large share of the ABE and lower-level ASE clients population will be persons with some learning disability, which may be quite severe. The national evaluation did not systematically collect information on this population. But its data do indicate the presence of this group within the client population, and discussions with program staff indicate that the population is growing noticeably in some programs. Just as is true of ESL, this population requires special instructional and administrative care, and finding ways to treat these people cost-effectively within the context of the program is likely to be of growing importance to the field.

Availability and Access to More Detailed Data from This Study

A product of the study is a set of public-use data files. Available on disk is a program-level file and a set of four client-level files. All data are available in the form of SAS data files (Version 6.08) at cost from Development Associates, Inc., or from the U.S. Department of Education's Planning and Evaluation Service in the Office of the Under Secretary.

For price information or order forms, please write to Development Associates, Inc., 1730 North Lynn Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209, or telephone (703) 276-0677.

APPENDIX A
STUDY OBJECTIVES AND WHERE ADDRESSED

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Objective	Report Location
1. Client populations and patterns of participation. To construct empirically based models of client "flows" through each of the program's service components (ABE, ASE, and ESL) which will permit detailed estimates of client intake, participation, and attrition over time.	Rpt 3: ch 2 Rpt 4: ch 2
2. Factors contributing to client persistence. To identify client background and service-program variables that are positively related to client persistence (or negatively related to client attrition).	Rpt 3: ch 3 Rpt 4: ch 2, ch 3 & 4
3. Reaching adults with basic literacy needs. To identify service-program characteristics that are positively or negatively related to attracting and holding adults with basic literacy needs.	Rpt 4: ch 4 & 5
4. Support and cooperation at the local level. To assess the extent to which Federal and State funds for adult education are effectively supplemented by other resources at the local level.	Rpt 1: ch 3 & 4; Cost Study Rpt
5. Program capacity and demand for services. To develop and compare regional and national measures of unmet (or deferred) demand for adult education services and excess (or under utilized) service capacity, and to assess the extent to which improved management of existing adult education resources might bring supply and demand into closer balance.	Rpt 1: ch 4 Rpt 4: ch 5
6. Participation rates of target populations. To develop estimates of the size and composition of target populations for each of the program's service components and, by relating these estimates to data on program clients, to assess levels and rates of program participation for these target populations.	Rpt 4: ch 5
7. Learning gains. To develop estimates of average learning gains as related to hours of instruction and/or tutoring for each program component and, by applying these estimates to data on participation, to assess aggregate learning outcomes generated by the program over a one-year period.	Rpt 4: ch 3, ch 4 & ch 5
8. Service costs. To develop estimates of average service costs as related to hours of instruction and/or tutoring for each program component and, by relating these estimates to data on participation and learning gains, to assess the service costs associated with producing successful outcomes.	Rpt 1: ch 4 Rpt 4: ch 2 Cost Study Rpt
9. Employment outcomes. To evaluate the extent to which sustained program participation is significantly associated with favorable employment outcomes, using employment outcomes of early leavers as the standard of comparison.	Rpt 4: ch 4
10. Dissemination. To stimulate wider interest in a discussion of policy issues in adult education by means of timely dissemination of findings and interim reports, commissioned papers on selected issues, and a national conference at the conclusion of the study.	Bulletins & Interim Rpts to the field
11. Independent research. To facilitate independent research on adult education by issuing unit-record data files for the national samples of service providers and new clients, along with provisions for linking these two files and high-quality user-oriented technical documentation.	Data tapes & documentation
12. Analytic agenda. To develop recommendations concerning future analytic agendas for adult education, with special reference to further uses of data from the 1992 National Survey of Adult Literacy and the 1990 Census.	Exec. Summary Rpt

APPENDIX B
CONTENTS OF MAJOR STUDY REPORTS

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First Interim Report: Profiles of Service Providers
(Development Associates, Inc., March 1992)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Overview of Local Service Delivery Systems

- Program goals
- Federal and state funding
- Overview of programs and clients

Chapter 3: Patterns and Profiles

- Program professionalism
- Services integration
- Program outreach efforts
- Client retention effort

Chapter 4: Program Services

- Outreach and intake process
- Instructional program
- Staffing and personnel
- Program funding and expenditure patterns

Second Interim Report: Profiles of Client Characteristics
(Development Associates, Inc., September 1993.)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Estimating the Number of Clients Enrolled

Chapter 3: New Client Profiles and Patterns

Chapter 4: Special Issues Related to the Characteristics of New Clients

- Differences in client characteristics
- The appropriateness of instructional placement
- The extent to which the neediest are served
- Motivations for enrollment in adult education

Third Interim Report: Patterns and Predictors of Client Attendance

(Development Associates, Inc., April 1994)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Patterns of Enrollment and Attendance

Chapter 3: Analysis of Differences Among Adult Education Clients Grouped by Extent of Attendance

- Differentiating enrollees who never attend class from those who receive some instruction
- Analysis of early leavers
- Predictors of persistent attendance

Fourth Report: Learner Outcomes and Program Results

(Development Associates, Inc., December 1994)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Patterns of Enrollment and Persistence

Chapter 3: Client Literacy Outcomes as Measured by Standardized Achievement Tests

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Chapter 5: Program Results

- Target population estimates
- New client rates of participation
- Current capacity to enroll additional clients
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Cost Study Report

(Development Associates, Inc., December 1994)

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Section 2: Purpose of Report
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Section 4: Quality of the Comprehensive Profile Survey Data

Section 6: Estimates of Service Costs
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